

# EFFECTIVE MEETINGS SURVEY REPORT

INVESTIGATING THE PERCEIVED USES AND BENEFITS OF NEW  
INNOVATIVE COLLABORATION TECHNOLOGIES AND HOW  
THEY CAN IMPROVE MEETING PRODUCTIVITY.

IT'S NOT  
WHAT  
YOU DO...  
IT'S  
THE  
TIME  
WAY  
PLACE  
THAT  
YOU  
DO IT.

**THIS IS BUSINESS PRODUCTIVITY**

TECHNOLOGY WITH PURPOSE

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In October 2011, SMART Technologies and Steljes Limited undertook research into the overall productivity and efficiency of meetings conducted by organisations, with a particular emphasis on what barriers are preventing them from holding effective meetings or from adopting technologies that could advance their overall worth.

The Effective Meetings Survey report is established from the findings of a 12 question survey that was completed by over 100 business decision makers at leading companies.

A key goal of the survey was to investigate the benefits offered by utilising new innovative technologies such as interactive whiteboards for meetings, alongside the issues hindering organisations from incorporating such tools; for example, cost perception, not knowing how to use such equipment and concerns that other businesses are not yet using such technologies.

This report demonstrates the survey respondents' frustration associated with getting all the required participants together in order to conduct meetings. Sometimes key decision-makers can be missing, delaying important progress and resolute outcomes to follow up on. With advanced communication technologies, such as interactive whiteboards, remote collaboration can be harnessed into the meeting environment, enhancing opportunities to involve significant contributors regardless of location and in as natural a way as possible.

The findings show that capturing the information that is communicated in meetings as effectively as possible is paramount to enabling their success – both

during their undertaking as well as in the time spent on them consequently. Overall, this report seeks to demonstrate that the results depict a growing understanding of the return on investment offered by technological solutions such as interactive whiteboards, as well as an enthusiasm to take meetings/collaborative communication to a new level.

## INTRODUCTION

Having conducted three surveys earlier this year, in which SMART Technologies and Steljes Limited investigated the use of collaborative technologies, improving business productivity and video and data conferencing, this survey builds upon previous findings to reveal how levels of staff efficiency and productivity in meeting environments could be boosted when harnessing technologies such as interactive whiteboards and data collaboration.

The results of this survey suggest that there is a significant interest in developing collaborative meeting environments with digital solutions, both internally and externally, yet there are still some barriers preventing organisations from adopting technologies that they either believe to be too expensive or not fully understood.

As the global leader in interactive whiteboards, SMART Technologies brings more than two decades of collaboration research and development to a broad range of easy-to-use, integrated solutions that free people from their desks and computer screens, so collaborating with digital resources is more natural.

Providing a variety of solutions that can enhance meetings in order for them to be as productive, stimulating and efficient as possible, Steljes is the leading distributor of

innovative technologies that improve the way we live, learn and work. An authorised distributor of SMART Technologies, Steljes is at the forefront of boosting the opportunity for organisations to gain competitive advantage through developing tools that can lead group communication to a more organised and cost efficient level.

We would like to thank everyone that has participated and hope that by using this survey you can gain a greater insight into the current understanding of the function, efficiency and role of meetings. The report seeks to show how survey respondents are aware that new technologies can offer the opportunity to transform meetings to a more creative level; encouraging an engaging environment for idea generation and overall productivity throughout organisations.

## METHODOLOGY

This survey is published by SMART Technologies and Steljes Limited. There were more than 100 respondents to the survey, which took the form of an online questionnaire with 12 questions to answer. Information about the questionnaire, including the link, was emailed to a list of pre-targeted senior business decision makers. As an incentive to take part, survey respondents were offered the opportunity to access a complimentary copy of this report and to be entered into a prize draw.

The survey was sent to senior decision makers, who were all identified as working for organisations with more than 250 employees, within specific site locations across multiple industry verticals. Examples of specific business sectors include Financial Services, Construction, Publishing, Real Estate and Computing. The majority of company respondents were UK based.

# ANALYSIS

## 1. Which of the following are issues within your meetings (tick all that apply)?

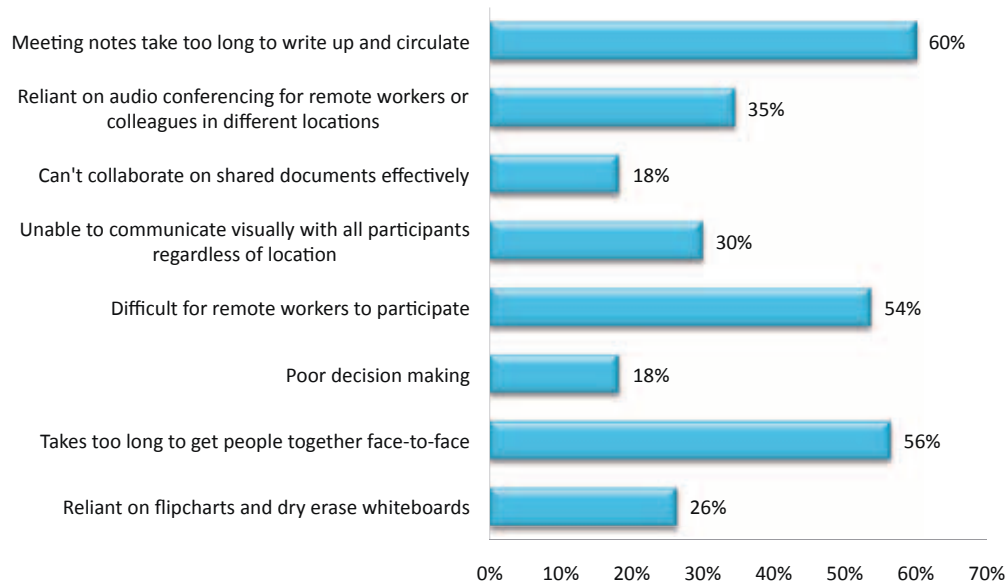


Figure 1

Meetings can be a nuisance, creating what can often feel like unnecessary extra work with endless notes and sometimes illegible action points. According to the survey respondents, the top three issues when it comes to meetings are; notes taking too long to write up and circulate, taking too long to get people together face-to-face, and difficulty for remote workers to participate. All of these factors can be addressed by adopting technologies such as interactive whiteboards with data conferencing software. This collaboration technology allows remote workers to participate in real-time as naturally as they can from a distance, as well as providing digital options for recording and circulating notes and information collated on the interactive whiteboard to all meeting participants instantly, eliminating the need to write up and circulate notes after the meeting.

## 2. Do you know what an interactive whiteboard is?

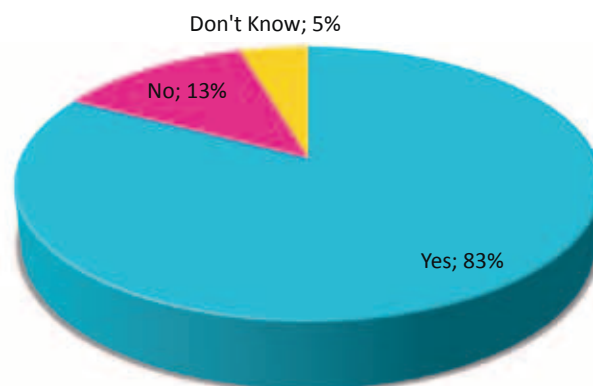


Figure 2

Nearly a fifth of respondents didn't know what an interactive whiteboard is - a sector of people, and therefore organisations, which could heighten their work efficiency and productivity levels significantly by becoming aware, and making use, of such beneficial technology. For the 83% who do know what an interactive whiteboard is, we are pleased to hear so. We need to understand whether the benefits are fully understood, if the respondents are using the technology and are they using it to its full potential?

### 3. Do you understand the benefits of an interactive whiteboard?

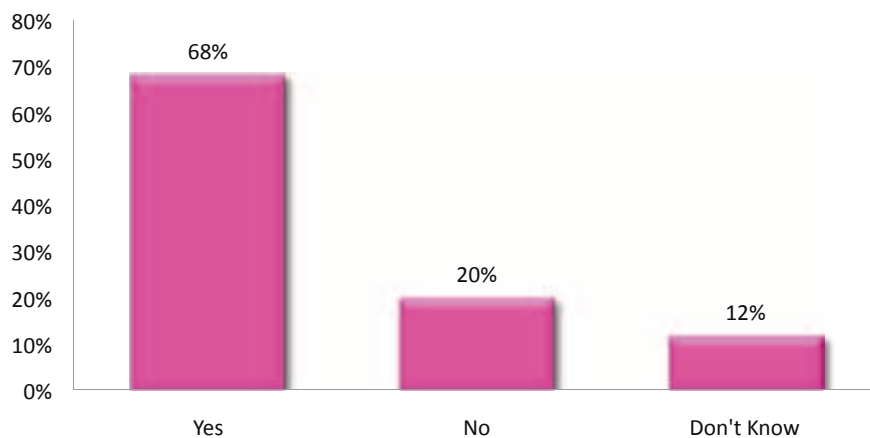


Figure 3

Over two thirds of respondents stated that they know the benefits of an interactive whiteboard – namely improving meeting efficiency, saving time, reducing travel and associated costs - however this leaves 32% who feel that they don't. It is the role of companies developing such technologies to provide awareness and knowledge detailing the benefits that this technology could bring to many organisations, in turn transforming their efficiency.

This does raise the question that if 68% of respondents understand the benefits, do they value these benefits and should we see wider adoption of this technology within businesses or do many perceive this technology to be at the early adopter phase of the technology adoption lifecycle for the business sector?



4. Rank in order of importance the following uses of an interactive whiteboard (where 1 is least important and 4 is most important)?

The table below ranks the most important uses of an interactive whiteboard.

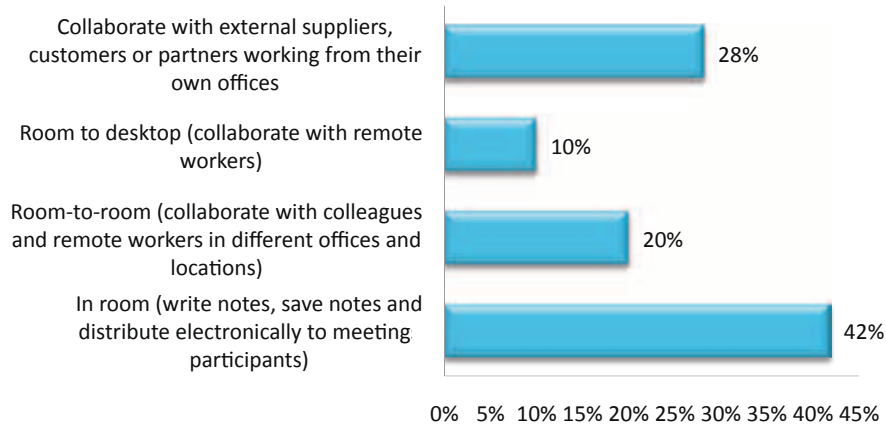


Figure 4

42% ranked in room usage (writing notes, saving notes and distributing electronically to meeting participants) as their most important use of interactive whiteboards. Just over a quarter ranked collaboration with external suppliers, customers or partners working from their own offices as their most important use of an interactive whiteboard, demonstrating the range of uses that such technology offers to various meeting environments.

The benefits from using an interactive whiteboard are clearly understood, with reduced time wastage from having to write up meeting notes or take pictures of dry erase whiteboards as a record of your meeting, and greatly improved productivity in the distribution of resulting actions. The return on investment models can be measured in a matter of months not years for meeting room installations.



5. What do you consider to be the features necessary for an excellent interactive whiteboard (tick all that apply)?

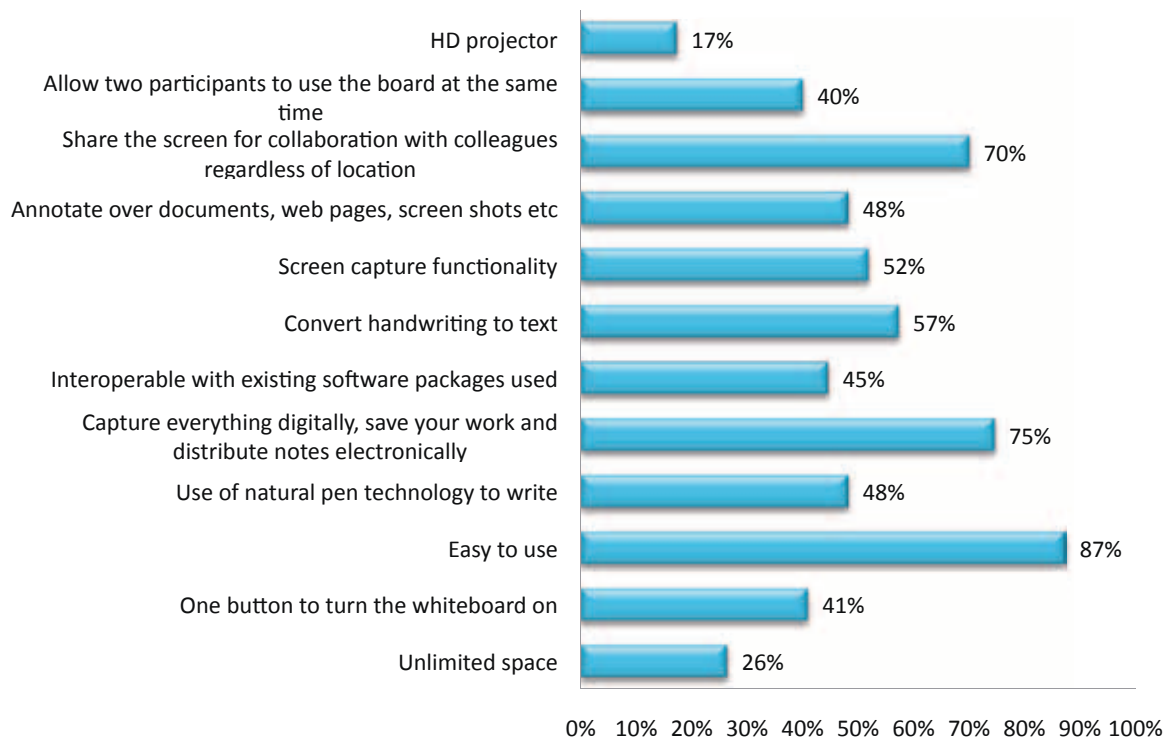


Figure 5

When asked what they considered to be the features necessary for an excellent interactive whiteboard the majority of respondents, 87%, stated ease of use. Other top choice factors included the technology offering the ability to capture everything digitally – being able to save work and notes electronically as well as sharing the screen for collaboration with colleagues regardless of location. Converting handwriting to text and screen capture functionality were key factors, with over half the respondents highlighting these. This was closely followed by the ability to annotate over resources such as Microsoft Office documents, web pages or screen shots and the natural way of working using the pen technology to write on the interactive whiteboard.

## 6. What do you think are the biggest barriers to adopting interactive whiteboards (tick all that apply)?

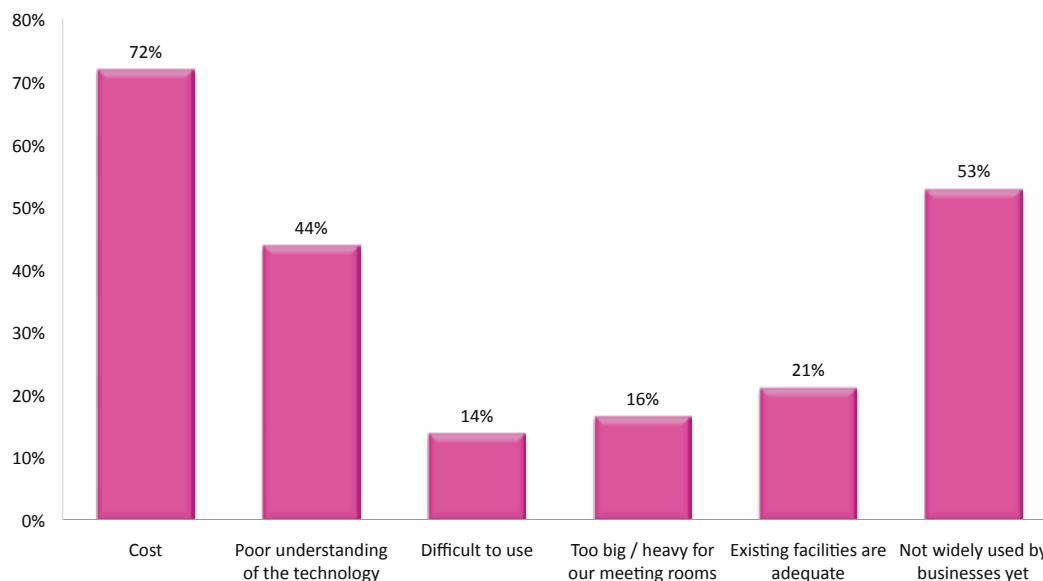


Figure 6

As far as barriers preventing respondents from adopting interactive whiteboards go, cost stood out without a doubt as the most important consideration preventing purchase. It is clear that greater consideration of the return on investment from such technology is needed to counteract this concern. Just over half of respondents felt that interactive whiteboards weren't used widely enough by businesses yet, therefore posing a barrier to wanting to use a technology that their peers or competitors may not yet be utilising. Nearly half of those surveyed also felt that a poor understanding of the technology stood in the way of adopting interactive whiteboards, highlighting the need for further education and communication to organisations on the ease of use of such technologies in order to remove such obstructions.

Given the results previously, it would seem that the issue may be that respondents do not truly understand the value of the benefits and the return on investment (ROI) is something that is not well understood or appreciated. With cost featuring as such a barrier the industry needs to do more to show how the ROI models work.

Interestingly, at recent focus groups run by SMART Technologies, those questioned were surprised at the affordability of interactive whiteboard systems. Research like this, combined with an understanding of ROI should help to reduce the perception of cost as a barrier to technology adoption.

For example: Typical in-room interactive whiteboard installations can reduce time wastage and associated costs and improve productivity meaning ROI is measured in a matter of months. Collaboration solutions with their associated higher investment costs still provide excellent ROI with the majority of customers seeing a return on their investment in the first 12 months.

Take a look at our ROI calculator at:

[HTTP://WWW.SMARTMEETINGS.CO.UK/ROI-CALCULATOR/](http://www.smartmeetings.co.uk/roi-calculator/)

## 7. Would you prefer an interactive whiteboard or interactive LCD display in your meeting rooms?

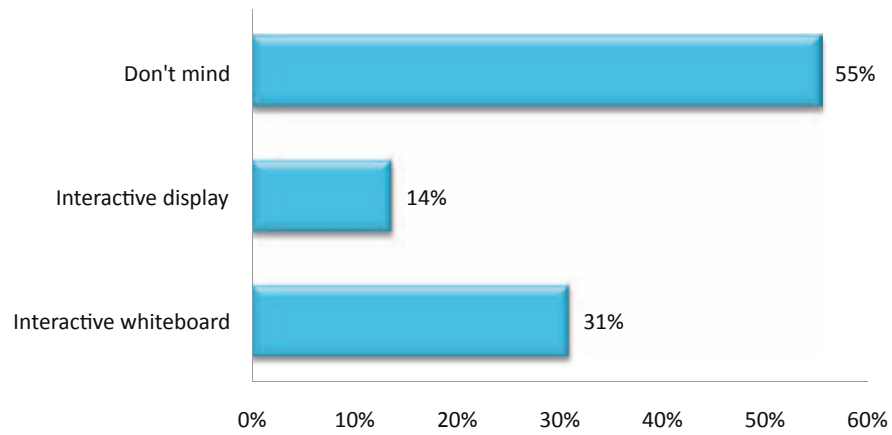
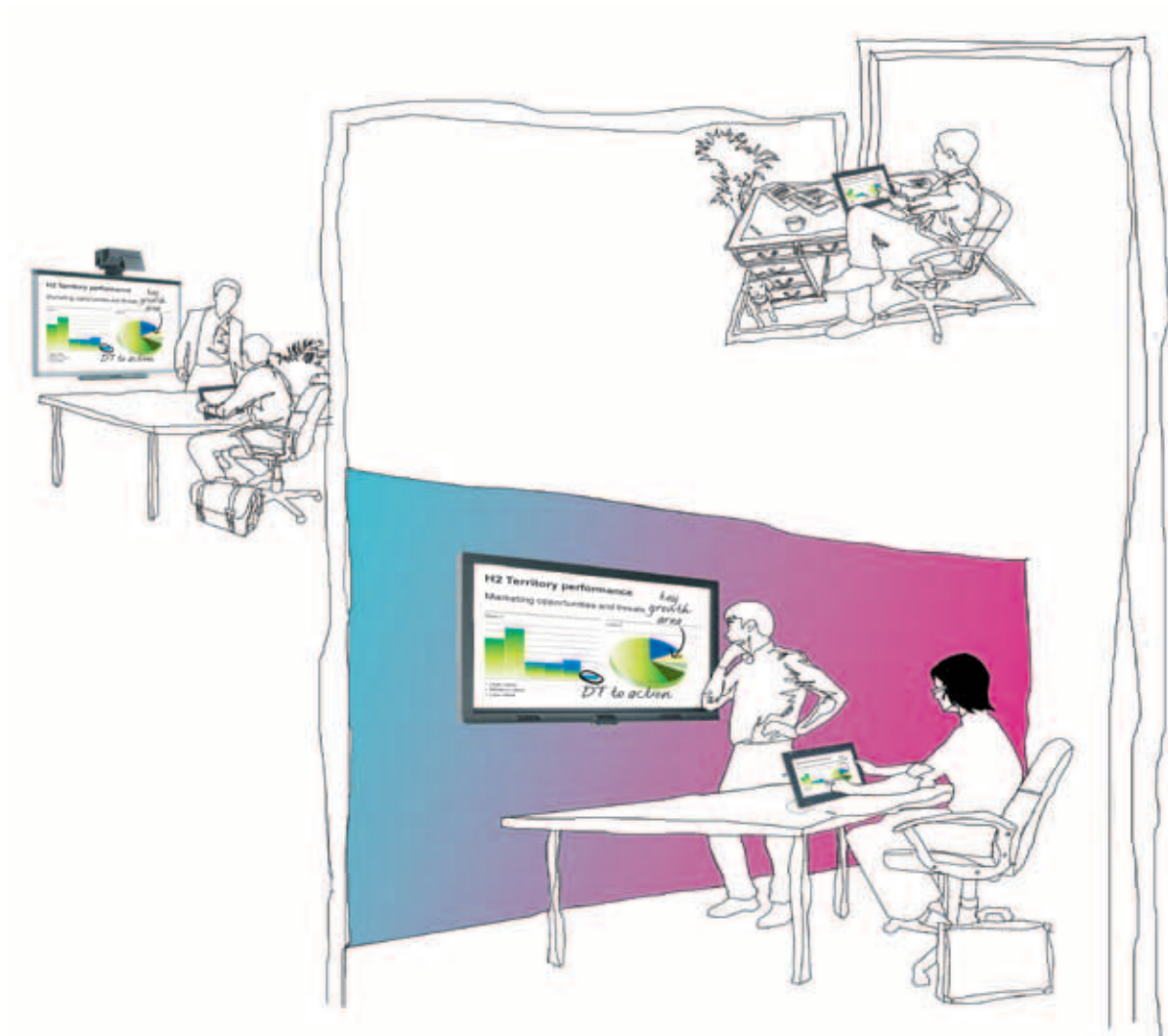


Figure.7

More respondents would prefer an interactive whiteboard over an interactive LCD display in their meeting rooms, however over half of those surveyed stated that they didn't mind either way. This goes against a perception that businesses may prefer the HD quality and high-tech design of a more expensive LCD display in their offices.



## 8. How often do you have meetings where everyone is in the same room or where they involve a remote worker(s)?

### 8.a) Same room

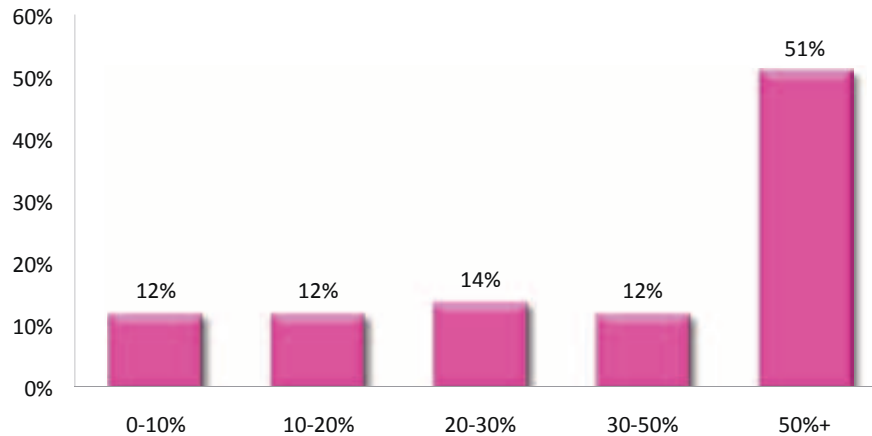


Figure. 8a

51% of those surveyed said that over half of their meetings involve having everyone participating in the same room. In this situation they could benefit from collaborating together using an interactive whiteboard and write, save and distribute meeting notes and actions via email from the interactive whiteboard to all meeting participants before they get back to their desks.

### 8.b) With remote worker (s)

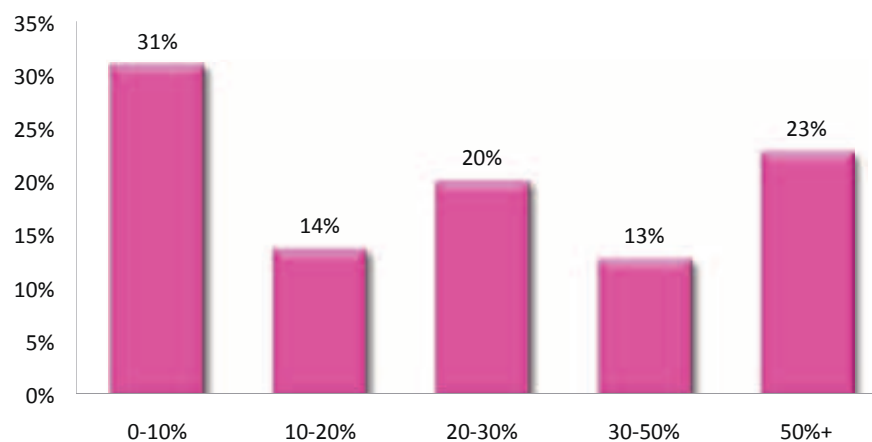


Figure. 8b

Almost a quarter of respondents said that 50% or more of their meetings involved participation from remote workers. Technology such as SMART Board™ interactive whiteboards with SMART Bridgit™ conferencing software would allow remote workers to join the meeting and see what is being communicated on the interactive whiteboard. If remote workers were in another location with an interactive whiteboard or maybe working from home with a SMART Podium™ interactive pen display positioned on their desktop they could also annotate over the same documents for participants in the meeting room to view. This sort of collaboration between locations can vastly increase meeting productivity as well as eliminating the wasted time and cost of participants needing to travel to attend the meeting.

**Q9. Which of the following technologies are essential for effective meetings (tick all that apply)?**

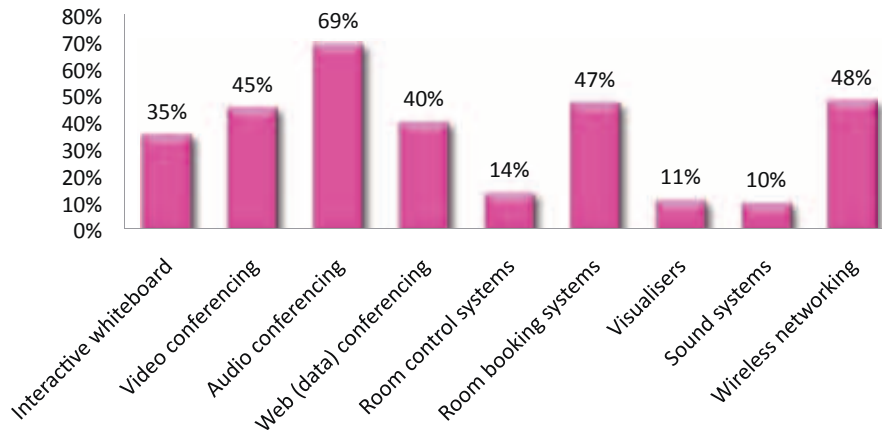


Figure. 9

The technology that stood out as most essential for effective meetings was audio conferencing, followed by wireless networking, room booking systems, and video conferencing. Survey respondents found sound systems, visualisers, and room control systems the least essential technologies for effective meetings. Over a third of survey respondents stated that interactive whiteboards are essential for effective meetings, demonstrating an understanding of the rewards that such technology can offer but showing an opportunity to educate the market more on the benefits especially when combined with some of the more popular technologies such as audio conferencing and video conferencing.

This result clearly reflects the market place and its appreciation of available technologies and a culture of falling back on technologies people are most familiar with. Unified communications bring data, voice and video together and in order to successfully interact and collaborate on documents people will need the functionality of interactive whiteboards and web (data) conferencing more and more.

To provide natural ways of working that avoid travel and associated expenses but still support visual collaboration and meeting face-to-face, which is the most important way for people to effectively communicate, businesses need a combination of all these services.

**10. Which of the following meeting room technologies do you find complicated to use (tick all that apply)?**

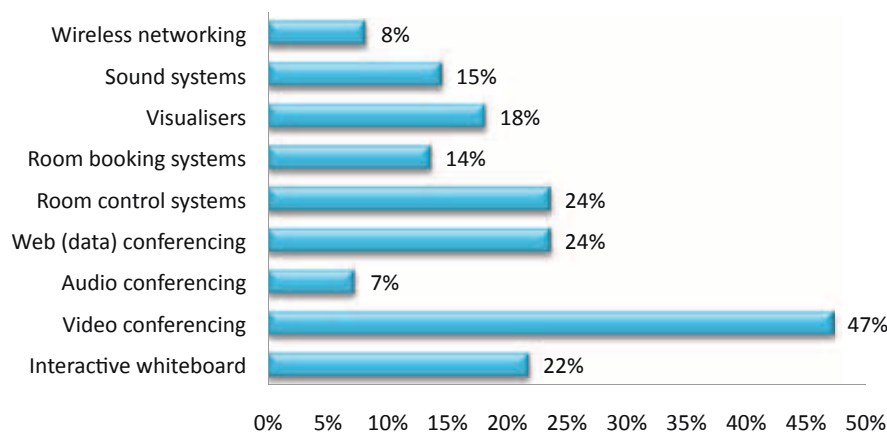


Figure. 10

Video conferencing was selected as the most complicated meeting room technology to use. As the findings of one of our previous surveys indicated, concerns relating to the quality of sound and visual not matching up, unclear images and technological problems, as well as ease of use, are all issues posed here. Only around a fifth of respondents said they found interactive whiteboards complicated to use, suggesting openness to using such a tool.

## 11. Are you planning to install interactive whiteboards in your organisation in the next:

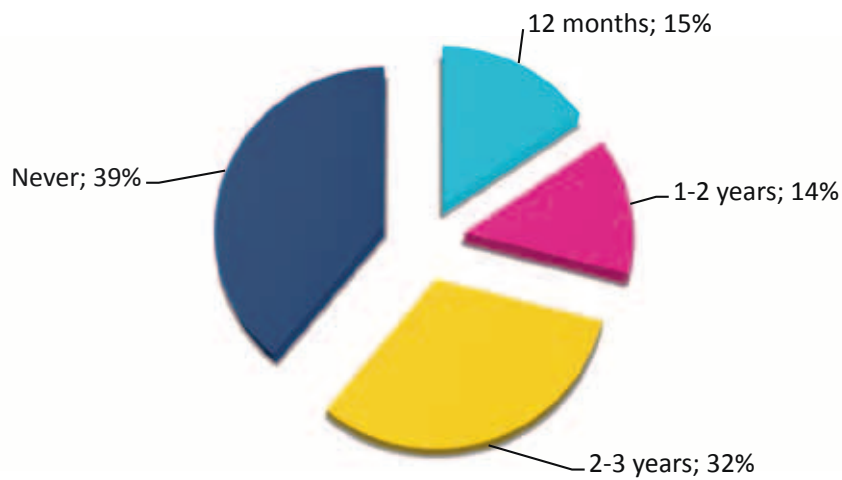


Figure 11

61% of respondents are planning on installing interactive whiteboards in their organisation within the next 3 years – of those at 15% plan to install in the next 12 months and 14% plan to install in the next 1-2 years. Of the 39% who stated that they would never install interactive whiteboards, it would be interesting to track the levels of time, cost and communication efficiency in their meetings over the next three years compared to an organisation that does adopt such a technology. If the 39% are to be persuaded to change their minds then clearly the cost, benefit, value and return on investment models need to be better understood and communicated by the industry.

## 12. Over what period would you expect to get a return on investment for an interactive whiteboard?

### 12.a) In-room solution

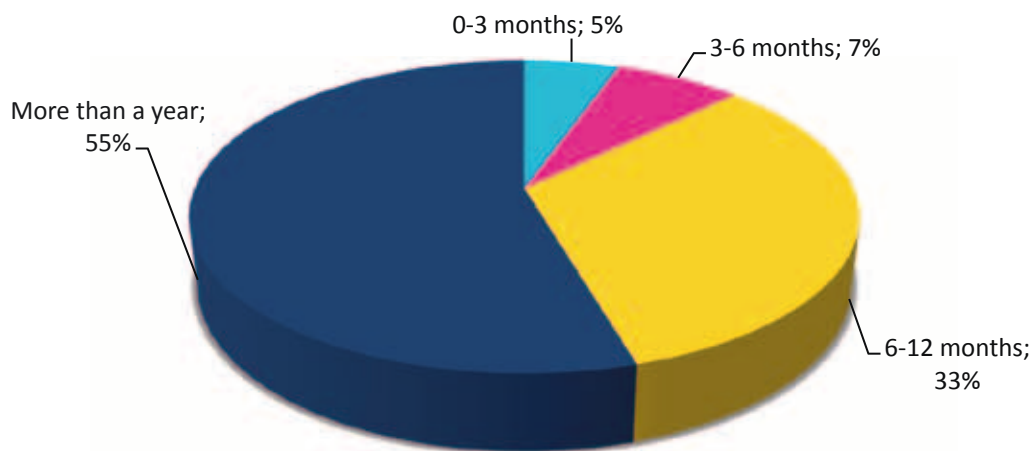


Figure 12a

If using an interactive whiteboard as an in-room solution, a third of those surveyed felt that it would take between 6-12 months to get a return on investment from adopting this tool in their organisation. However, over half of those surveyed felt that it would take more than a year – this could be due to not being fully aware of the benefits that the technology could bring like time efficiency when considering issues such as writing up notes from meetings, ensuring clear communication and establishing a more fast-paced, interactive and creative-thinking collaborative environment.

As mentioned previously, ROI models for in-room solutions typically show a return within the first 3 – 6 months and clearly the market place perception is out of sync with the actual, typical ROI found by customers. Much more needs to be done to change this perception.

## 12.b) Collaboration solution (collaborate with other meeting rooms, locations and remote workers)

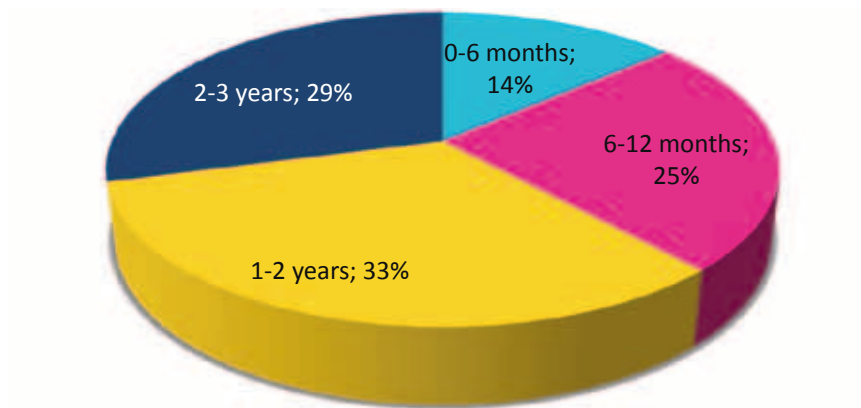


Figure 12b

When considering interactive whiteboards as a collaboration solution, a quarter of respondents felt that it would take between 6-12 months to reap a return on investment. A third of those surveyed believed it would take a period of 1-2 years to gain any financial reward on their purchase. This is much closer to the research and return on investment models typically found by customers with the majority seeing a return on their investment within the first year, but clearly more needs to be done to explain the value and return timelines.

# CONCLUSION

Meetings can be productive; they can also feel like a waste of precious time. Sometimes disjointed due to exhaustive note-taking and not forgetting the often time-consuming writing up process. Meetings can either boost collaboration, team motivation and decisive action outcomes or lead to an ongoing sense of organisational and creative stagnation.

This report demonstrates that the organisations surveyed are aware of the benefits of fostering collaboration technologies such as interactive whiteboards and many of them have stated that they plan to do so.

There is clearly a gap in understanding the value of the benefits and the return on investment models and timelines for recovering the capital cost of projects. This needs to be better understood if organisations are to drive wider adoption of this technology.

Digital solutions such as interactive whiteboards offer a more visually stimulating and, therefore, dynamic meeting environment, but also allow external participants to be included in as natural a way as possible, keeping up with the pace and flow of meetings without having to incur the time and cost wastage associated with travelling to them.

By adopting such technologies, staff relationships can be progressed as they develop a more interactive form of communication. This can result in increased idea generation and a boost of creativity – energy previously spent on note-taking can be invested into thinking, engaging and contributing.



# ABOUT US

## ABOUT STELJES

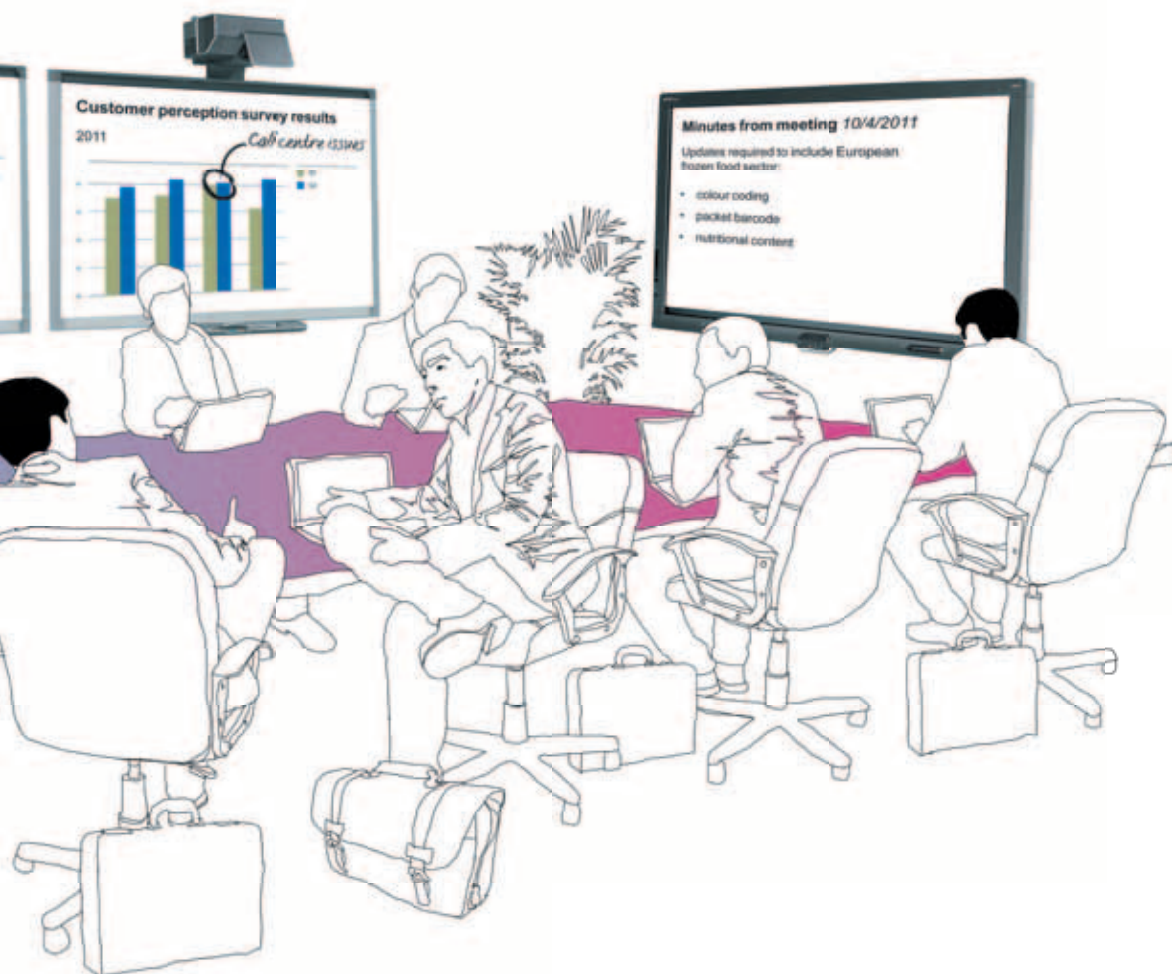
Steljes Limited is an innovative technology distributor that sources products from around the world, working with manufacturers to customise and bring their solutions to the UK market through its specialised channel network. The company's innovative solutions enable people to interact and communicate more effectively while working and learning. The company has been sourcing products from around the world for over 20 years, introducing LCD panels, projectors, plasma displays and interactive whiteboards to the UK market. Steljes Group is a privately owned company and has helped companies, such as SMART Technologies, to become market leaders in the UK.

[WWW.STELJES.COM](http://WWW.STELJES.COM)

## ABOUT SMART TECHNOLOGIES

SMART Technologies is the leading provider of collaboration solutions that transform the way the world works and learns. As the global leader in interactive whiteboards, SMART Technologies brings more than two decades of collaboration research and development to a broad range of easy-to-use, integrated solutions that free people from their desks and computer screens, so collaborating and learning with digital resources are more natural.

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