

## **TANDBERG Customer Profile: Welsh Local Education Authority**

Client: Rhondda Cynon Taff LEA  
Contact: Gareth Lees  
Title: TANDBERG videoconferencing selected for second largest LEA in Wales

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### **TANDBERG VIDEOCONFERENCING SELECTED FOR SECOND LARGEST LEA IN WALES**

#### **The LEA:**

With 19 secondary schools under its control, the Rhondda Cynon Taff LEA is the second largest LEA in Wales.

In May 2002, the LEA installed TANDBERG videoconferencing facilities in seven of their schools, in addition to two neighbouring schools. The strategy for initiating this was to support consortia developments, broaden curriculum and learning experiences, counter the lost time caused by travelling between schools and support pupils to be able to receive new tutoring from external sources.

#### **The Challenge:**

The ability to offer a wide and varied selection of subjects in post 16 education seems critical for many schools and colleges in order to attract more students each year. But balancing the demand from students for the more 'unusual' subjects with the ability to offer these courses that often require a critical mass can often be the biggest hurdle schools and students have to jump.

Schools within the Rhondda Cynon Taff region faced such a dilemma. The demand for broadening the curriculum, consortia working between schools, the need for sharing of curriculum materials was apparent but then the cost of the teacher time, travelling between consortia schools, cover costs for staff and other barriers were making new learning opportunities difficult.

Gareth Rees, Secondary School Improvement Officer at Rhondda Cynon Taff LEA, explains: "Seven of our secondary schools, in different consortia, were committed to widening the breadth of learning provision for their students, developing individual learning skills, and tackling the barriers of transport and distance between the schools to improve student and staff learning experiences. Videoconferencing was a viable option to address these issues".

#### **The Solution:**

The Rhondda Cynon Taff LEA selected TANDBERG videoconferencing primarily because of its level of picture and audio quality, and as TANDBERG itself supported bridging plans to a much greater extent than its competitors. TANDBERG was also seen as the best choice for the money available. The TANDBERG 550 was the particular unit that was chosen – a lightweight, portable set-top unit that fits perfectly on to any standard TV.

"We were able to compare immediately the differences between networks and systems and know which would work for our application", comments Gareth Rees. "We were also able to identify how we could share information across the schools in line with our security policies, and support other schools both within and outside the county borough council".

As part of the installation process, each school was offered 200 hours of free multipoint use to allow lessons to be delivered to more pupils at different locations at the same time. This was gratefully received by the schools, saving time and money from the teacher's point of view and also allowing the school to offer greater flexibility with timetables and subject selection.

### **The Result:**

Teachers, pupils and parents alike have responded very well to the use of videoconferencing in lessons. 'A' level students have benefited in particular by being allowed to participate in a number of different lessons, including Law and Religious Education which would otherwise have been inaccessible to them. The system is currently used on average five times per week, however the Rhondda Cynon Taff LEA hopes to double this within the next twelve months.

Due to the ease-of-use of the equipment, it was simple to roll- out the TANDBERG system to the schools in the LEA. Careful planning and the training received ensured that teachers and pupils alike were soon accustomed to the system and felt comfortable using it in their day-to-day learning environment.

Gareth Rees comments: "From our perspective, videoconferencing has widened teaching and learning potential considerably. Not only can we now provide our pupils with a fuller range of subjects, but it has also enriched the way we teach. It has proved a great practical resource for us and the possibilities are endless".

A further plus point in the use of videoconferencing has been its ability to teach pupils the value of listening to others and how to communicate effectively to an audience. Indeed, videoconferencing's ability to instil social skills has been duly noted and will be used to utilise this aspect of education more in the future.

Tom Somborg, Managing Director of TANDBERG UK, believes that videoconferencing is becoming an increasingly important tool in education: "We have witnessed a tremendous growth in the education sector in recent years which, I believe, is due to the ability of videoconferencing to enhance knowledge and as teachers find it a way to keep up with the demands of the job. In an age that offers a great wealth of information, videoconferencing is an easy way to tap in to resources that simply were not available a couple of years ago. With the establishment of an ever-increasing network of schools that use videoconferencing, this knowledge base can only increase in the months to come".

### **About TANDBERG**

TANDBERG is a leading global provider of videoconferencing solutions. The company designs, develops and manufactures videoconferencing systems and offers sales, support and value-added services in more than 60 countries worldwide. TANDBERG is a global company with offices in the United States, Norway, the United Kingdom, Canada, China and Japan. TANDBERG is publicly traded on the Oslo Stock Exchange under the ticker TAA. For more information, please visit [www.tandberg.net](http://www.tandberg.net).