

REMOVING THE FEAR FACTOR



Paul Beavis

Today's digitally aware students are comfortable embracing new technology, yet some schools remain wary owing to the perceived risks of implementing something new. Scomis Consultant Paul Beavis provides some pointers for minimising risk and embracing change when adopting new technologies.



Ensure new solutions are fully aligned to the school's vision

Implementing technology purely to use the latest buzzwords and gadgetry is a false economy. When technology is embedded as part of the school's vision, it is more likely to succeed and improve student outcomes.

Use providers that understand IT in education, wherever possible

This helps reduce the total cost of ownership and allows for smooth implementation, because the provider will understand the specific challenges around the use of IT in an education environment.

Seek independent, objective advice

Obtain case studies (and contact school reference sites) for reassurance that a solution will meet your specific requirements. Demos are helpful, but nothing beats visiting an existing school to see a solution being used for real.

Learn from previous experience

It may seem obvious, but a comprehensive review of what you already use prior to adopting new technology is vital. This will uncover how effectively your existing solutions are being used and identify any current barriers. It is important to learn lessons from past experience. A comprehensive review may indicate your existing technology is fit for purpose but is not embedded. In some cases, creative tweaking (and repurposing) of what you already have will allow you to achieve your goals and avoid unnecessary spend.

Have strong foundations

It is important to review your existing network/wireless infrastructure and internet connectivity. Running new technology on weak foundations will undermine its performance, leading to slow systems and dead time.

Consult with end users and test on a small scale

The early involvement of users will flag issues not previously envisaged, allowing for adjustments prior to full deployment. Piloting allows for a cost-benefit analysis to evaluate a solution's effectiveness before committing further resources.

Use a champion to engage and motivate stakeholders

Colleagues may perceive new technology as causing them more work or a criticism of the way they currently work. The champion should be an enthusiastic and assured user of technology, motivating and inspiring stakeholders with the confidence to do things differently.

The champion should be credible with their target audience; therefore, a Teacher Champion may be best placed to work with teachers and a Student Champion with students.

Invest in ongoing staff training and support

Scarce budget can be wasted on technology that doesn't work, or if staff don't know how to use it, so ensure training and support is continuous so that its use is maximised. ■

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INFO

ISBL Approved Partner Scomis is a specialist provider of ICT solutions and services to schools that deliver best value and improved outcomes. There are other suppliers in the market providing similar services, and ISBL recommends you research the market fully before committing to any change.