

IT'S THE BEST BIT OF KIT I'VE EVER HAD!

When we hear someone enthuse strongly about a particular product, a typical first reaction is to think they must be exaggerating. However, the team at Naace - the professional organisation for advancing education through ICT – see new ICT products all the time, so when their general secretary describes something as “the best bit of kit I ever had”, it’s worth finding out what she’s talking about.

Naace provides information, support, development and networking opportunities to those using ICT in education. Its activities include publications, conferences and events, continuous professional development, consultation and representation.

Several of the Naace staff recently began using the Neo notebook from AlphaSmart to handle writing and administrative tasks. Events manager Melanie Bowler is one of those using a Neo every day, and describes it as a “real life-saver”.

Mel’s job involves a lot of paperwork, from writing up minutes of meetings to creating material for events. She now writes everything on her Neo, transferring it onto a PC for further work as required. Because the Neo weighs less than a kilo and is battery powered, she can easily take it into meetings and to off-site appointments.

Mel says: “I’ve used my Neo on my travels for the past few months, and now I don’t go anywhere without it. I can write up minutes during a meeting, on my way back to the office or at home, and it saves me so much time and paper. It’s quick and easy to transfer them to a PC when I get back to the office – for example, I transferred the minutes of a six-hour meeting in less than a minute.”

Before she had the Neo, Mel used an MP3 player with audio stop/start, but she finds the Neo much quicker. She reckons things now take her a quarter of the time they used to.

“The other advantage of the Neo is that it’s easy to use,” she adds. “There are no wires and you never have to wait for it to do something. You just turn it on and start

typing, and as it saves automatically you just switch off when you're finished. It looks good too."

Mel's boss Mary Barker, the general secretary of Naace, is another enthusiastic Neo user. "I'm so impressed with the Neo, my family have banned me from talking about it!" she said.

"It's a wonderful piece of equipment – simple, effective and practical. I use it at all my meetings to take notes instead of writing them by hand. Now I don't need to transcribe anything, I just download it to my laptop when I get home for formatting and sending on to colleagues. My notes are now much more accurate and detailed."

Mary also loaned the Neo to her partner, who runs his own business, and he and all his colleagues "went bananas" over the product. "He had a hard time getting it back!" she laughs.

"The Neo may have been designed for the education sector, but it's just as useful in business. It's the best bit of kit I've ever had."

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