

Overview

AWARD - £2,684.45 incl £900 Documentation Authorship, Set Up, Care and 12-month Support Package

This remote access, unknown funds awarded, solution primarily provides remote attendance for 4 quorate participants and up to 7 additional attendees to take part in monthly Equity branch meetings. The acquired technology is suitable in situations where a venue capacity can hold up to 50 people.

This is a solution for a small to a medium-sized meeting. It was specifically configured to extend the capacity of an Equity Branch where an average meeting may attract between 10 or 20 members.

The kit box also includes a video camera providing capture for edit of guest speakers and accessible video updates for branch news updates. Remote access solves a travel and accessibility situation but some members are not available at the time of the meeting due to work commitments. Video updates are a good way to add a friendly face to a newsletter.

The purpose of this awarded money was to provide the West of England Variety Branch (WEVB) with the technology and knowhow to offer remote access via video, and recording equipment for the branch to capture to grow the branch's physical attendance while providing the remote access participation option.

This package provided by PCM creative includes documentation of the equipment purchased, mobile internet, a secure cloud computing solution belonging to the branch, a laptop plus 12 months strategic and technical support to enable WEVB Members, Committee Officers, Regional Councillor and Equity Organizer, Staff even guest speakers the opportunity to participate remotely with the Branch's meetings, AGMs and Committee's Meetings.

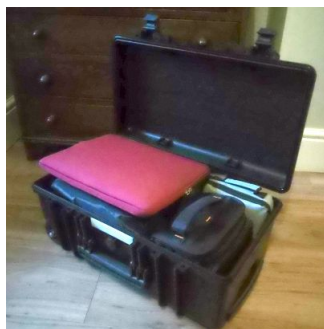
The resulting technology acquired serves several purposes to provide a flexible and complete (3-5yr future proofed) self contained package.

What's in the box?

The technology tool kit enables:

Remote access connectivity - independent internet connectivity.

Mobile wifi unit and 1yr of data is included to facilitate meetings where venue wifi is weak or absent. A wifi extender was purchase following usage consultation as the regular WEVB meeting venue has wifi but it does not reach the room the branch use. This makes hosting meetings geographically flexible where the presence of a mobile data signal is the only prerequisite for remote attendees.



Portability and Storage

Explorer Case - An industry grade flight case is part of the provision. Extension Cables for power, HDMI cable and display adapter, laptop sleeve and webcam case. Looking after the equipment and including all the cables and adapters to function in isolation was built into the quoted solution.

The equipment sourced fulfills 2 criteria.

1. Suitability for the purpose within budget restraints and lifespan

2. Storage for self contained deployment and readiness when required.

A checklist and sign out form, basic set up instructions plus reference manual are part of the final package.

Remote access setup (detailed in the branch kit manual)

Laptop with external USB webcam combined with a bluetooth speaker and 360 surround table conferencing microphone and micro projector. A tripod provided for the webcam for manual panning to follow conversations around the table or raised position for capture where a speaker is standing to present.

Remote access attendees to be seen and participate in branch business

Mini projector and fabric projection screen. This is to provide a presence in the venue for those attending via remote access where a monitor screen is unavailable.

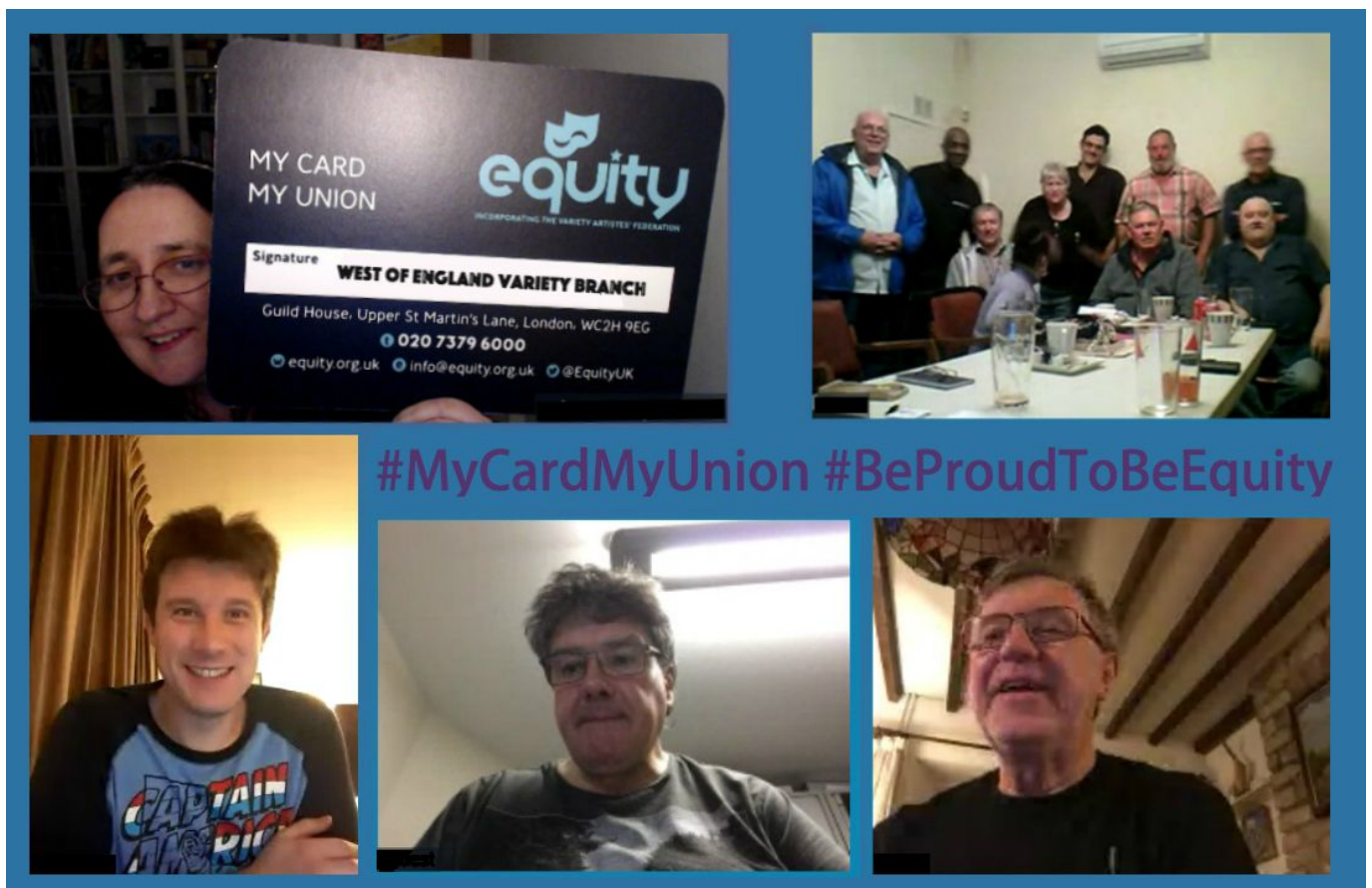
Recording of Guest Speakers

Video camera, Mic input and handheld USB radio mic provides HD capture for documenting branch activity (campaign marches or hosted variety shows for charity), updating WEVB members not attending the meetings in the hope of encouraging future attendance.

Impact of the kit box

Delivered for use at the SW Area AGM in March 2019

Used at all consequent branch meetings. All meetings have been quorate.



Branch Report by Cliff Evans, West of England Variety Branch Chair.

The West of England Variety Branch
Remote Access Kit Funding.

As a branch along with many others, we were struggling at times to be quorate. The Branch would like to thank Equity for enabling us to pioneer this technology.

We took delivery of the kit in March 2019. Since then, it has been used to great effect, and has ensured that the branch is always quorate. We have also used it for the south West Area AGM, the Bristol and West General Branch and The Arts Mind Symposium where in all cases, it has helped to improve attendance, in fact one of our branch members whom was very involved in committee had a stroke which stopped him not only working but coming to meetings. I am glad to say that with this remote access, he now attends and contributes nearly every month.

We have used the equipment very effectively throughout the year. On several occasions, we have had the Area Organiser and Area Councillor join in with the meeting remotely.

From time of delivery and throughout its use, Caron has supported the branch tremendously, including travelling to Bristol on several occasions to help and advise. She continues to attend our meetings remotely on a monthly basis.

Before we had this equipment, we were using various bits of kit which were not up to the task but, gave us the desire to improve what we had. We have as a branch added a number of enhancements to the kit which has also made a difference and been of benefit to the performance.

The West of England Variety Branch would unanimously encourage and assist if needed, any other branch that would wish to pursue the route of remote access.

Extended Participation and Member Engagement

Connection with SW region councillor

On several occasions the SouthWest region's councillor Xander Black attended branch meetings via remote access.

Xander says being the South West Area Councillor and having the ability to remote access into a West of England Branch has meant he can "attend" more of the West of England's meetings. Before receiving the kit box there were issues with connectivity and technology. Xander on occasion had issues with the connectivity at his end of the equation. Connectivity for the remote member is important to consider.

Since obtaining the equipment it has made it much easier for him to attend West of England Variety Branch meeting and engage, compared to other meetings in the region. Attending he says "is more fluid visually, more accessible and audible. Also, when I attend meetings (present in the venue), I feel that those who are joining us are able to properly be a part of the meeting more." The equipment was also used for the South West Area AGM, which allowed members to attend who wouldn't normal.

SW area AGM

The kit box was laid out and demonstrated as well as used to provide remote access for 2 participants unable to travel. A section of all was selected to project the remote access widow (projector, webcam and conferencing mic/speaker) to enable 2-way engagement. An instastant message text chat was hosted by PCM through the video application WhereBy.

To illustrate how this YouTube mini vlog - outing of the kit box to provide regional remote access - <https://youtu.be/d7egizPYSSc>

WEVB joint meeting with Bristol & West General Branch - April 2019

The remote access platform, Whereby being used to provide the video room has been adopted by the Bristol and West General Branch. At the April meeting the WEVB kit box was used in conjunction with BWGB own 12 seat capacity video room.

This was an opportunity to see the kit in action at its limit. With the bright room the projection was slightly washed out but the purpose is to provide a window where the venue attendees can see the people present in the video room. The most important part is good audio and video for the remote access and sound back into the venue so attendees can hear the remote access participants speak, ask questions or contribute when called by the chair.



Assistive Technology for the Secretary

Working with the West of England Variety Branch gave an opportunity to evaluate the equipment cost with a view to ensuring the best equipment specification was provided addressing the needs of the branch.

Minute taking and accurate reporting can be compromised when business and social collide. Livescribe Notebook, Pen and App enables audio capture alongside written notes with the capacity to convert notes into text for edit and report writing.

Finally... and next steps

This remote participation, presentational AV solution has increased the capacity for branch coordinated activism without the costly outlay of travel expenses. In year 2 the branch will be encouraged to track usage and resulting engagement the kit box affords.

2944, 7% of the membership resides in the SW area. The WEVB is the only Variety Branch in the region. (2017 Annual Report p106) A deeper understanding of their desire to participate can be achieved through newsletters with video messages and recording links to guest speaker talks.

There were no predefined success metrics to map the last 12 months against. Anecdotally the success is moral boosting and all meetings are now generally quorate making the branch's business more productive and sustainable.

TODO before March 2020

1. Continue to offer and actively host remote access participants.
2. Keep a record of attendees using the remote access.
3. Create a 6 issue newsletter series to target and engage regional variety members
4. Use the video camera to capture a guest speaker
5. Access and orientation for Google accounts
(Gmail, GDrive, YouTube, AdobeSpark, Davinci Resolve)

Associated Paperwork

Sign out/in Sheet for borrow, lend or hire

Equipment checklist

Preparation pre check list

Folder with instruction manuals filed

Basic setup guidance for

- Video Room for a Branch Meeting
- Video Room for a Committee Meeting
- Capturing Video at a Guest Speaker