We see the Herschel Learning Lab as the future of teaching and learning. Synergy tables support a variety of teaching styles and methodologies providing greater pedagogical flexibility than standard lecture spaces. By using technology integrated furniture we can create an improved, immersive and interactive way of teaching and learning that increases academic engagement and ultimately enhances the student experience.

Colin Fahey
AV Team Leader

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The Brief
Keen to move away from the traditional pedagogies used in standard lecture theatres, Newcastle University wanted to develop an innovative learning space that encouraged collaborative activities for students in small groups to work on a variety of tasks including, problem solving and preparation of presentations, all of which could be facilitated by ICT.

A working party was set up to guide the planning of the new flat floor space at the University, to reflect the diverse requirements of the broader stakeholder group, as part of the Research and Development for this project.

The working party discussed what teaching and learning activities might happen in this new space, what was needed in order to facilitate this and what group size and room capacity issues there might be. They identified a requirement for tables that would seat groups of students with screens either mounted or free standing to ensure flexibility, which could also be controlled by the lecturer from a central point.

Newcastle University had successfully worked with Dalen TOP-TEC on a number of projects and were confident that TOP-TEC would provide a cost effective solution that met their requirements and solved their challenges. Dalen TOP-TEC were able to supply a solution that had a level of functionality and flexibility that the University required.

Herschel Learning Lab

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A number of departments had to combine in order to transform the first floor into an innovative, collaborative learning space, the ‘Herschel Learning Lab’. The room had a capacity of 120 students and was fitted with Synergy Plectrum shaped tables which could seat groups of up to 6 or 9 students. Each table has an integrated monitor-screen/computer which can be controlled from a central teaching console by the lecturer or used by students to create and display their group work.

Knowing that flexibility was key, TOP-TEC proposed a fixed solution of Synergy Plectrum tables positioned around the perimeter of the room, seating a maximum of 9 students. As well as six-seat folding Synergy Plectrum tables which were positioned in the centre of the room, to easily fold and move away to the side, creating an open central area. A Contour lectern was specified for the teaching point that was to be positioned in the centre of the space, to ensure the lecturer had full scope of the room.

Each Synergy Plectrum included a central cable well, enabling cable connections to go through the centre of the table for better access and a 10U rack attached underneath to allow secure racking of AV and IT equipment.

The versatile space is now being used for teaching and learning and is undergoing an evaluation period to assess the impact the Herschel Learning Lab has on the practice of teaching and the student experience.
Key Features of Synergy:

- Ergonomic design, worktop neck increases the users distance from screen, putting less strain on eyes and neck.
- Flexible design produces a small footprint with options to add sockets and ports to the legs.
- Variety of sizes, seating groups of 3 to up to 20 people.
- Multi-functional can be used for collaborative activities, meetings and seminars.
- Customisable connectivity in the mast and leg and includes optional cabling in the worktop.
- Housings available to integrate technology such as wireless connection points.
- Synergy can be supplied as static or mobile, with a relocatable folding option for multi-purpose rooms and easy storage.

The Benefits

Synergy Plectrum
Synergy Plectrum table is ergonomically designed and promotes group focus, collaboration and engagement, using the screen as a resource. Ideal for Technology, Enhanced Active Learning (TEAL) environments and agile working spaces. TEAL environments have been shown to increase the attainment levels in education.

Synergy Folding
The Synergy Folding table utilises the space to its maximum, adaptable for any room size and flexible, the folding top allows the table to be moved around a room freely. The screen and table top rotate so that the table will pass through any standard doorway. The freestanding and fully configured product is ideal for all spaces and is particularly beneficial where structural changes are restricted.

Contour
The Contour is a prestigious lectern, available in a number in a range of sizes to suit all room types. Designed to securely house media equipment, it is available with 16U or 32U rack space.

The Contour range provides a substantial storage space, ease of access to equipment, compact cable management and an independently supplied rack system that allows media