

# Success Story



# Backpack Revolution:

Smart virtual meetings at Fond of thanks to Sharp

## **The Windows collaboration display in use at the textile and bag specialist Fond of**

Since it was founded in 2010, the Cologne flagship start-up Fond of has made impressive progress and is now one of the world's leading companies in the field of bags and textiles. The course for a lucrative future has been set: the latest technology supports the company's innovation-driven work environment in its new headquarters, "The Ship" in Cologne-Ehrenfeld and embodies the "New Work" idea like hardly any other office building in Germany.

Fond of relies on the powerful Windows collaboration display from Sharp for productive, dynamic meetings. The display has been designed to work seamlessly with the familiar Microsoft tools that individuals and organisations will already be using in their workplace.

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### 10 years of vision and innovation

Fond of GmbH, headquartered in Cologne, was founded in 2010 as a bag label that initially focused on ergonomic schoolbag design. Today, Fond of has more than 300 employees and its portfolio is aimed at a broad target audience, from pre-school to young professionals. The company sells backpacks, suitcases, bags and fashion products in over 35 countries worldwide under the brands Aevor, Affenzahn, Ergobag, FUNKTION SCHNITT, pinponq, Salzen and Satch. This makes the company one of the five largest in its industry. Fond of's top priority for all products is the use of high-quality materials, responsible production and ergonomic, target group-oriented design as well as responsible manufacturing. For example, Fond of works exclusively with bluesign®-certified system partners and most of the materials in bags and backpacks are made from recycled PET bottles. Fond of thrives on the lively exchange and innovative spirit within its teams, and this corporate culture generates brand new models every year, each of which is characterised by a unique selling feature.

### Forward-looking work environment: "The Ship"

Fond of created a new concept for media equipment after it moved into its new company headquarters, dubbed "The Ship" in Cologne-Ehrenfeld at the end of 2019. With more than 13,700 square metres of space for "activity-based workspaces", as well as the latest digital technology and architecture, "The Ship" embodies the corporate philosophy of focusing on a productive work environment that promotes a feel-good vibe, freedom, creativity, networking and joint innovation. The most important principle in the digitisation concept for The Ship building is that technology be used in such a way that it offers the users of the building more comfort, and promotes productivity through faster processes.

The media equipment concept had to be adapted accordingly: the old projectors were tossed to one side. The team under Mathias Heinz, Head of IT at Fond of, looked for a solution that would do justice to the Ship's modern premises and environment and the company's ambitions. The main focus was to collaborate and exchange ideas. In the course of the research, the team became aware of Sharp's collaboration solutions through their integration partner, zgoll GmbH.



### **High tech for the highest demands**

As one of the most modern collaboration solutions on the market, the Windows collaboration display from Sharp in particular seemed to be custom made for Fond of's high demands. As one of the first displays of its kind, it is characterised by state-of-the-art technology that offers a wide range of services in terms of collaboration. It has been optimised for Microsoft applications, which means that it can be quickly integrated into existing work environments. This gives companies a digital hub for teamwork, whether on site or remotely - an aspect that was particularly important to Mathias Heinz and his team.

### **IoT sensors for optimal working conditions**

In addition to the integrated camera, microphone and display technology, it incorporates proven touch technology from Sharp IoT sensors. They react to environmental factors such as temperature and oxygen levels, to achieve optimal working conditions. They are compatible with Microsoft Azure Digital Twins for intelligent environments, making the 70-inch display perfect for interactive meetings in smart buildings such as "The Ship". The decision to work with the Windows collaboration display was made quickly: a total of 22 devices were installed in the new Fond of meeting rooms.





### **Virtual collaboration: Connected despite the distance**

Since then, a lot has happened at the Cologne-based company in terms of meetings. The installed Windows collaboration displays are used regularly and with pleasure, and prove, especially during the pandemic, that they live up to their name. “In times of home office and social distancing, the displays make a valuable contribution to digital collaboration,” says Mathias Heinz. “In particular, the displays have greatly simplified using Microsoft Teams. Despite the physical distance, teams can connect and exchange ideas in the best possible way.”

The whiteboard function, which allows ideas and meeting notes to be digitally recorded on the displays and stored in a central location accessible to everyone, is used particularly frequently.

“The displays convinced us from the start,” continues Mathias Heinz. “There have not been any difficulties with implementation in the existing infrastructure, nor any technical faults or failures since we have started using the devices. Everything runs very reliably, and interaction with Office 365 works perfectly. Feedback from colleagues on its simple, almost self-explanatory use proves us right. We are very satisfied and would highly recommend Sharp at any time.”



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Mathias Heinz, Head of IT at Fond