

Extron ShareLink 200

Scenario

Professor Baxter is teaching an animal science course using team-based learning. As part of their learning, students work on problem solving in groups and regularly have to share the results of their work. Before a *ShareLink 200* was installed in his classroom, professor Baxter relied on students presenting from their tables without the help of visual aids. Alternatively, he would have students come to the front of the class and load their materials on his laptop, connected to the classroom projector, or hook their own laptops up to the projector. This practice was often cumbersome and robbed the class of valuable time for learning. With the *ShareLink 200* students are now able to prepare their visual aids on their laptops or mobile devices and present directly from their classroom tables. For example, in one project the students had to recommend the right medical treatment for a dog, based on various data, such as results of blood work. As students often recommended different treatments, based on different aspects of the data, professor Baxter could now have everyone display their suggested treatment together with their rationales. In smaller class sizes where there are only four groups, student are also able to use the *ShareLink* feature that allows for four screens to be displayed simultaneously. This way, competing suggestions can be displayed, compared, and debated in class in an effective manner.

1. What is it?

A wireless content sharing device that allows users to share screens from Mac and PC laptops and Android and iOS devices.



Figure 1: Extron ShareLink 200 front and back views (Source: Extron).

2. How does it work?

The *ShareLink 200* is a small device at 1.0" H x 6.51" W x 3.3" D. It is connected to the institutional network where users can connect to it by downloading the Extron ShareLink software for Mac and PC laptops or the MirrorOp ShareLink app for iOS and Android mobile devices. This allows users to share their screens onto the classroom projector.

3. What are the key features?

During our limited testing session the *ShareLink 200* proved stable and reliable. The user interface of the device is simple and provides information on how to connect. The laptop and mobile device app user interfaces are also fairly straightforward with good functionality. On laptops, users can simply share their screen and pull up any documents or websites they want with the caveat that online videos may be slightly choppy and that audio does not transfer wirelessly but only plays on the local device. However, locally stored videos are transferred through a specific section of the laptop application and many common video formats, with audio, are supported. Consider, though, that for video to work the laptop must be on the same subnet as the *ShareLink* receiver, which may be difficult to ensure in a classroom setting. In terms of control and support, the *ShareLink* may be accessed via its IP address and wireless access by users can be controlled by setting a randomly cycled PIN code or a user-selected permanent code. Up to four users may transmit their screens to the *ShareLink* simultaneously and the laptop application contains a moderator mode to control who and what is displayed. Files may also be accessed directly from a USB drive or portable HDD through the USB port. Users may furthermore share their presentation materials via the Webshare function, which allows other users to see a copy of what is being displayed on the screen on their own devices. The *ShareLink* may be powered via the included external power supply or via Power over Ethernet (PoE). Another interesting feature is the built-in wireless access point (WAP) which allows stand-alone connections to the *ShareLink*. While this limits the presenter to local or downloaded content, it creates a way for users to present without being on the institutional

network. Finally, the MirrorOp for Extron ShareLink app includes an annotation feature that lets users annotate what they are displaying.



Figure 2: Extron ShareLink 200 user interface.

4. What are the potential uses on the ISU campus?

- Classrooms
- Conference rooms
- Collaborative spaces



Figure 3: Laptop user interface.

5. What are the implications for teaching and learning?

Using a device such as the *ShareLink* in the classroom allows instructors and students to take advantage of the increasingly capable mobile devices for learning and presenting and allow for some distinct pedagogical opportunities involving the students' mobile devices and laptops. For example, groups involved in team-based, project-based, or active learning can share their work from anywhere in the classroom. Of course, the instructor will need to learn to use the *ShareLink* and how to integrate it into their teaching. One key feature is the compatibility with both Android and iOS devices as well as Mac and PC laptops, greatly increasing the likelihood that students will have a compatible device.

6. What are the downsides?

Online video cannot be transmitted to the *ShareLink*, but locally stored videos can be shown from laptops through the appropriate section of the *ShareLink* application. Devices for which there are no compatible MirrorOp apps, such as BlackBerry and Windows Phone, cannot transmit to the *ShareLink*. Website and document scrolling sometimes shows considerable lag from mobile devices and the WebShare function is not dynamic but requires users to manually refresh their screens each time the presenter changes what is on the screen.

On a general note, one product or solution is rarely the best for all possible use scenarios and not all scenarios have been tested in this limited review. IT Services continues to review the broad adoptability for campus for this type of technology and other similar products exist. If you are interested in using this type of technology, please contact us so that we may help you review the available options and ensure that any product you choose will work with the IT infrastructure.

7. What are the key technical specs?

- Ethernet port
- IEEE 802.11 b/g/n 2.4 Ghz wireless network and access point (*ShareLink 200* model only)
- 3 USB 2.0 ports
- HDMI out
- VGA out
- Audio out
- External power supply included, Power over Ethernet possible (not included)
- Compatible with USB keyboards and mice.

8. Where can I find out more?

Visit the *Extron ShareLink 200* product pages <http://www.extron.com/company/article.aspx?id=ShareLink200ad> and <http://www.extron.com/product/product.aspx?id=ShareLink200#spec>.

You may also contact Jacob E. Larsen (jlarsen@iastate.edu) in IT Services to discuss how the *Extron ShareLink 200* can be used with your students.

Additional [legal information](#).