



Move to HP IT infrastructure brings learning to life at Ballarat Grammar

Overview

In a world where students are as familiar and comfortable with technology as they are with pen and paper, ICT plays a fundamental and unique role in the school environment.

As a school that strives for excellence, Ballarat Grammar recognises that having an ICT environment that supports the learning requirements of students – and satisfies teachers and parents – is vital.

Editorial contacts:

Brad Swiney
Hewlett-Packard
02 9022 7689
brad.swiney@hp.com

Stephanie Witts
Burson-Marsteller
02 9928 1505
stephanie.witts@bm.com

Hewlett-Packard
410 Concord Road
Rhodes NSW 2138
Australia
www.hp.com.au

Ballarat Grammar is Victoria's second largest boarding school with 1,350 students, including 240 boarders. Spread over twenty hectares and with demanding and tech savvy users, the school has ICT needs that are as complex and demanding as many a large corporation.

Three years ago, Ballarat Grammar undertook a strategic review of its operations and identified the need for a complete ICT overhaul. According to the school's Director of ICT, Nathan Burgess, the needs of staff and students had outgrown the school's existing network and system resources.

"ICT plays a critical role in assisting us to deliver the curriculum to students in a relevant and engaging way," he said. "In order to catch up to the requirements of students and staff, we decided to overhaul our ICT infrastructure so that we had a high-performing, easy to manage, reliable and scalable infrastructure."

The primary considerations for Mr Burgess and his team included managing ICT over a large and distributed campus; ensuring the highest levels of security; and providing 24/7 access to a growing number of students.

Working closely with HP Business Partner, Trident Computer Services, Ballarat Grammar modernised its infrastructure by implementing HP technology as standard across the board. The new ICT infrastructure at the school includes HP desktops, notebooks and tablet PCs; HP servers; and a HP ProCurve network system. Ballarat Grammar has systematically refreshed its technology with HP over the past two years, with Trident's assistance. The results so far have exceeded expectations.

Aside from the fundamental benefits of a manageable and reliable ICT environment, the new HP IT infrastructure is facilitating the continued and growing use of technology at Ballarat Grammar to deliver engaging education and to stimulate student learning.

Business Challenges

Greg Bell, Ballarat Grammar's Head of Technical Services, and his team had been battling to cope with the ageing network and servers at the school for some time. Servers were becoming unreliable and were not meeting the growing needs of students and staff.

"We have a small technology team supporting a large campus environment, so we need equipment that is reliable and easy to maintain," said Mr Bell. "Services need to be available around the clock, particularly to service those staff and students who live on campus. We also have to factor in how we provide different levels of access to network resources and applications to teachers, administration staff, day students and boarders."

"Our old network was just not fast enough anymore. We were getting major bottlenecks, and it was time-consuming to administer. Our limited resources were continually being spent on putting out fires," he said.

At the point when the server centre outgrew its old room and had to be moved across campus, away from the computer labs and classrooms, the ICT management team realised that the time had come to perform a complete hardware and network upgrade, as recommended in the strategic review of operations.

How HP helped

Ballarat Grammar enlisted the help of its long-time IT partner, Trident Computer Services, who had a detailed knowledge of its IT landscape and requirements.

"Trident's understanding of our needs and its faith in HP technology gave us the confidence to move away from our previous Cisco network and the generic servers we had in place and commit to a standardised HP infrastructure that would be implemented over time," said Bell.

"We were determined to create a mission-critical, corporate-strength ICT environment. For that to happen, not only did we need faith in the products but also confidence that we were working with IT partners who would be supportive and responsive over the long-term, not just at the implementation stage. HP and Trident have instilled confidence in us," he said.

Trident, a HP ProCurve solutions provider, helped Ballarat Grammar migrate its entire campus network to an HP ProCurve 10 Gigabit network switch and wireless internet technology. The network was installed over one week in January 2007.

As well as the new network, the school gradually replaced its conglomerate of generic servers to an integrated HP server solution. This included the purchase of 12 HP servers and a HP blade server. Storage and back-up was enhanced through an HP Storage Area Network (SAN) and HP tape library.

The conversion to an all-HP environment has continued to the client interface. Over a three year period, the school will be introducing new HP desktops, notebooks and tablet PCs, and is also considering a HP thin client configuration coupled with HP blade PCs.

Value delivered

The new network and systems made an immediate and profound improvement to the performance and reliability of Ballarat Grammar's computing environment, according to the school's ICT team.

"The performance of the HP ProCurve networking products was four times as fast as it had been with our previous system. We have even had positive feedback from staff and students about the improved speed of the network," said Burgess.

"As well as performance, the other obvious improvement came with the ability to administer the entire network centrally. This allowed us to pre-empt capacity requirements much more easily and reliably manage the maintenance load. It also allows us to focus on our other core objectives, such as providing disaster recovery, back-up and security enhancements," he said.

Beyond the technical benefits, the new ICT system has enhanced Ballarat Grammar's ability to provide the excellence in teaching it strives for.

"The HP tablet PCs are proving to be popular with teachers as they can plan and deliver an entire lesson from the tablet. They are also experimenting with new interactive elements to the way the curriculum is interpreted and taught," said Burgess.

"The technology we now have in place is facilitating creativity in the development and delivery of our curriculum. Increased interactivity and multimedia use means we can teach students in a way that really suits them, bearing in mind that today's students have grown up with technology. Ultimately this is about bringing out the best in our teachers and students," said Burgess.

Summary

Industry: Education

Solution: Working closely with HP and Trident Computer Services, Ballarat Grammar has overhauled its ICT landscape from an underpowered, underperforming and messy infrastructure to that of a high performing corporate environment. By standardising with HP servers and storage, a HP ProCurve network and HP desktops, notebooks and tablets, Ballarat Grammar has laid the foundation for innovations in teaching and learning.

Hardware: HP desktops & notebooks, HP ProCurve switches & WAPs, HP G4 & G5 servers, HP tape library, HP blade servers, HP SAN and HP UPS & ERMs.

Challenge: In order to meet its pursuit for excellence in providing a world-class learning environment for its 1,350 students, Ballarat Grammar needed to transform its ICT landscape to create a high performing, reliable and easy-to-manage technology and systems infrastructure. Challenges included providing a consistent 24/7 experience over a large and distributed campus, as well as enhanced security and the ability to deal more effectively with periods of peak demand.

About Ballarat Grammar: Ballarat Grammar School is Victoria's second largest boarding school, with 1,350 students (with around 30 per cent of the senior school being boarders). Ballarat Grammar fosters the pursuit of excellence by providing its students with a broad liberal education of the highest quality, in the Anglican tradition.

It caters for day students and boarders from Kindergarten to Year 12.

About HP: HP focuses on simplifying technology experiences for all of its customers – from individual consumers to the largest businesses. With a portfolio that spans printing, personal computing, software, services and IT infrastructure, HP is among the world's largest IT companies, with revenue totaling \$US110.4 billion for the four fiscal quarters ended April 30, 2008. More information about HP is available at www.hp.com.au.

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