

Hills Grammar School

Overview

Hills Grammar, an independent, co-educational school in northern Sydney, recently undertook the largest single infrastructure upgrade in the school's 20 year history. Working with its technology partner Accucom, the project involved an entire HP ProLiant server infrastructure upgrade and the roll-out of more than 40 new HP desktops to accommodate the school's rapid growth and increasing reliance on computing in every part of the curriculum and school business.

Hills Grammar School has significantly grown in the last 10 years from 450 students to full capacity of more than 1,200 students and 120 teaching and administrative staff. Its IT system, which was an accumulation of different servers patched together over the years, was fully extended and failing regularly.

The solution, implemented by Accucom, involved moving the school to a complete HP server, network and desktop environment which provided greater performance, reliability and improved systems management.

Business Challenges

According to information manager, Stephen Liseo, the computing requirements of the school were equivalent to the needs of a large business and all applications mission critical. "The school is comparable to a large corporation and our clients, the students, are using computers in every subject area," he said. "Our IT failure rate was becoming unacceptable and the systems were choking with demand and running out of storage," he said.

At the school, students use a variety of computer learning tools and applications, including multimedia applications such as web pages and video editing, all Microsoft office applications and computer programming languages. Many students complete their major works for their HSC on computer, and for every subject and every student, the storage requirements are huge.

"These applications are mission critical and must be able to respond to the demands of peak periods during school hours and perform reliably. In addition, our administration and ancillary staff work all year round, running a massive accounts and business operation.

"We needed to improve reliability and redundancy and create an IT infrastructure that would continue to grow with our expanding needs and perform at a high level," said Liseo.

How HP Helped

A long term IT objective for Hills Grammar and Accucom has been to steadily transition the school's computing assets to a complete HP hardware environment. The school for many years has invested in HP desktops, with more than 450 desktops across the school, and this major upgrade was the final stage in standardising its hardware inventory.

The incumbent server infrastructure – a mix of multi-vendor and clone servers of a variety of different vintages – was replaced by 10 HP ProLiant DL360 servers. These servers provide a

robust and scalable core IT system for the entire school, comprising a Netware cluster of four servers, three Microsoft servers, two internet gateway servers and one test/failover server. The solution also included a completely upgraded network based on HP switches and an HP StorageWorks SAN solution to provide continued storage scalability as the system grows.

The implementation occurred during school holidays and during the end of the construction of a new school building, reducing disruptions to school operations. Many of the new HP desktops went into the science labs in the newly built wing of the school. The HP dc7600 desktops are used for data logging for experiments and have even been built into the benches with glass tops to avoid spillage from experiments.

"Accucom was responsible for establishing the clustered environment and most of the migration of services and data to the new system," said Liseo. "The whole process was very smooth."

Value Delivered

Since the upgrade, the difference in performance and reliability has been significant. Billing runs and the printing of the student's reports now run twice as fast.

"Across the board, performance has been great in terms of download times, processing and even just logging in. All users have noticed an improvement in speed," said Liseo.

Most importantly, however, the system has been completely reliable, with no downtime recorded to date.

"Whilst this was a massive single investment, the system, we now have gives us a reliable, high-performing and scalable infrastructure that will support our demands and growth for many years to come.

"We are now a complete HP environment and that has given us a fully integrated solution with a single set of tools to administer the system. The solution has simplified our IT management and enables Accucom to be a single point of contact for support and skills ... not that anything goes wrong now." said Liseo.

About Hills Grammar School, Kenthurst

Situated in Kenthurst, NSW, Hills Grammar School is a non-sectarian co-ed school providing quality education from Kindergarten to Year 12. www.hillsgrammar.nsw.edu.au

About Accucom

Accucom Systems Integration Pty Ltd was established in 1988 to assist Australian businesses with their ever changing IT requirements. Accucom assists organisations in developing their IT strategy, designing, building and integrating the technical infrastructure using best of industry products by HP, Cisco, Microsoft and Novell. www.accucom.com.au