



HP solution cuts costs and gives Luther College room to grow

Overview

The IT department at Luther College, a co-educational Lutheran secondary college in Melbourne's outer eastern suburb of Croydon Hills, consists of a Director of IT, two support engineers and a trainee. They are responsible for maintaining the IT systems that support teachers, administrative staff and the significant student population of 1,000 in years 7 to 12. On top of this, they provide a managed service for a further three Lutheran colleges in Victoria and Tasmania.

With the school population continuing to grow, and a new middle school under construction, Luther's existing IT infrastructure – a distributed desktop PC environment and hundreds of laptops – was becoming too difficult to manage. There were concerns about the cost efficiency of the existing system, a lack of flexibility, and security risks. Luther College also ran a range of varied applications, such as Adobe Photo Shop Suite and 3D Studio, which are very graphics intensive and difficult to run in a traditional distributed desktop PC environment.

Chris Topp, Director of IT at Luther College, decided it was time for a fresh look at their IT strategy and its ability to meet the demands of the dynamic environment of the school.

He approached long-term Luther College partner HP, who had implemented their existing IT infrastructure, for advice. After looking at a range of options, the decision was made to move from the existing IT infrastructure to a HP remote client solution, allowing IT to be centrally managed at the school.

Business Challenges

Luther's IT team had its hands full, with 850 laptops and 350 desktop PCs to be maintained in the school's administrative and classroom environments. Its extended responsibility in providing a managed service for additional colleges also meant putting IT engineers on the road on a once-a-week basis.

Maintaining a distributed desktop PC environment was a heavy load for the IT department. There had been some concerns at the lack of flexibility and security risks, as well as questions over cost efficiencies and fears that, with a growing school population, these pressures would only intensify.

"There were times when problem solving would fall outside the scope of teachers and it would be necessary to bring in engineers," said Mr Topp.

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"All expertise was being forced out to the devices on the edge of the network, in both classrooms and administrative departments."

If there had been a break-in it would have been a serious problem, not just in the loss of equipment and data, but the applications that were installed on individual computers and custom applications that were in use throughout the college. Applications used at Luther College are extremely varied and some, such as the Adobe Photo Shop Suite and 3D Studio, are very graphics intensive, which would be hard to run in a traditional distributed desktop PC environment.

With the rapidly growing school population, and the construction of a new middle school underway, it was time for a fresh look at Luther's IT strategy and its ability to meet the demands of this dynamic environment.

"Clearly, it was going to make more sense to have IT resources centrally located," Mr Topp said.

How HP helped

Luther College had a long-term relationship with HP, who implemented their original distributed desktop PC environment.

"We have always purchased first-class equipment, and we have always had HP desktop PCs and servers," Mr Topp said.

"When we decided to make the move to a centralised IT system we had a cursory glance at other remote client solutions on the market. But we admit we are very pro-HP."

The decision was made to replace the desktop PCs with a HP remote client solution, involving HP thin client terminals, HP mobile thin clients and HP blade PCs. This solution would centralise the management of IT infrastructure at Luther College. The HP thin clients would be assigned to and supported by centrally-located HP blade PCs with a standard operating system. Each thin client used by a student would hold minimal amounts of data and would depend on the blade PC to which it was assigned for processing and data storage.

The HP Session Allocation Manager would manage the assignment of connections between the thin clients and the desktop sessions running on the blade PCs in the data centre via HP Remote Graphics Software, making them available as needed.

HP blade PCs perform like desktops and have the same capabilities but they are a fraction of the size and grouped together in a location, which is centralised within the customer site and remote to the user. They are housed in a blade enclosure, which is stored in a rack. Blade PCs have a standard operating system where users are assigned to a blade, and it becomes their PC during their working session. If a blade PC goes down, another picks up the working session, with virtually no interruption to the user.

"We were happy with a one-to-one relationship between HP's thin client and blade PC systems, which would give us much more flexibility in how resources could be allocated," Mr Topp said.

"Instead of simply buying a solution then finding out it doesn't deliver, HP was happy

for Luther College to run a full proof-of-concept on site, which resulted in a very successful outcome. Their technical expertise dove-tailed extremely well into our IT department skill set, making the whole process run smoothly."

"This year marks a very big implementation," Mr Topp said. "With the construction of the new middle school there is a huge advantage in providing students with the HP mobile thin clients, in particular."

Meanwhile, all existing desktop PCs on the campus are progressively being replaced by thin client terminals, connected to HP blade PCs with the Altiris Management Suite being used to manage all the machines.

Value delivered

According to Mr Topp, Luther College perceives its upgrade to a centralised system as "buying a solution - not just boxes".

The wider Lutheran philosophy of the college means it is also focused on the environment. The low power consumption of the thin clients and mobile thin clients and the energy efficiency of the HP blade PCs are in line with this.

Running costs too have been reduced, with real economic gains in being able to put more thin clients into a classroom.

"With a thin client you have a life cycle of five to six years. They are solidly constructed, can be wireless enabled, and because they have no moving parts there is a lot less to maintain," Mr Topp said. "Nothing will break. They are very robust."

Centralised remote management of the network is simply a matter of allocating HP blade PCs as required to manage classroom activities.

"It means we need fewer skills on the ground and we don't have to worry about the day-to-day niggles," Mr Topp said.

"A major benefit of the HP remote client solution is the ability to direct thin clients to specific application pools. This cuts down on the number of licenses we have to pay for, along with keeping our licenses in house."

Summary

Industry: Education

Solution: Centralised HP remote client solution with HP blade PCs supporting thin clients and mobile thin clients. This computer environment has led to a reduced IT management workload; an extended equipment lifecycle; enhanced data security; more efficient energy usage; and a reduction in the total cost of ownership.

Hardware: HP t5730 thin clients, HP 2533t Mobile Thin Clients and HP bc2500 blade PCs

Software: HP Session Allocation Manager, HP Remote Graphics Software, Altiris Management Suite. Applications include Microsoft Office, Photo Shop Suite and 3D Studio.

Challenge: To centralise the management of IT, reduce the total cost of ownership of IT and accommodate future growth.

About Luther College: Luther College is a Lutheran co-educational secondary college with 1,000 students. Located in outer Melbourne it has a strong academic program as well as an emphasis on the arts and sport. As a Christian school in the Lutheran tradition it is part of a wider community that cherishes values such as faith, hope, optimism and service to others.

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