



Think Beyond the Desktop

How Remington College Handled a Large and Geographically Dispersed Desktop Refresh

This case study is brought to you by PC Connection, Inc., parent of the PC Connection family of companies, a collection of best-in-class information technology (IT) solutions providers. Its subsidiaries include PC Connection Sales Corporation, GovConnection, and MoreDirect, which service small- and medium-sized businesses, government, and enterprise markets, respectively.

» Remington College has 20 campuses nationwide offering diploma and degree programs designed for students who want focused, hands-on training. When Remington College wanted to perform a complete refresh of nearly 4,000 desktops, they turned to a trusted IT partner that could lead the way to administrative flexibility, cost reduction, and improved systems management.

Tomorrow's Classroom, Today

CIO Chuck Farraj admits that Remington College was eager to upgrade their classroom equipment. After refreshing the campus's network and server infrastructure, Chuck felt the time had come to invest in updating their desktops.

The IT team at Remington College wanted to give their students a new outlook on the way technology could support their education. With 20 campuses, and many desktops to replace, the scope of the project required careful planning. Chuck originally approached the refresh with the idea to simply replace the old desktops with new ones. They were prepared for the investment, but by working with PC Connection, they uncovered a better, lower-cost solution.

With PC Connection's expert guidance, Chuck discovered that Remington College could roll out a nettop solution offering centralized software and management. Nettops are small form-factor desktop computers designed for basic computing tasks like surfing the Internet, accessing Web-based applications, or word processing. Not only are they less expensive than desktops, but they also consume less power. Choosing cost-effective nettops meant the campuses could get more new machines, sooner.

Staying Nimble

Chuck wanted to have the power of local processing in the classrooms so that if there were any network, LAN, or Internet disruptions, students could continue their work. The IT team configured the nettops with a thin, clean, Windows 7 image and loaded Microsoft App-V on each machine. App-V was used to create an identical experience for students no matter which desktop they used in the classroom.

App-V allows administrators and instructors to schedule students into classrooms based on the size and population of the class, rather than around the software that is loaded on the machines in a particular room. With the application virtualization capabilities of App-V, Remington College is now able to deliver any application to any classroom. In addition to the flexibility

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of scheduling classes, if they need to make a change, or add or upgrade software, the deployment is completely centralized. The IT staff can prepare the application one time and push it out to all of the campuses through the App-V infrastructure.

The system is configured so that if an application is not already loaded on a computer, it will stream from a local server on the LAN to make it available within just a few seconds to that student. For the most part, instructors cache all of their applications locally on the nettops. That way, they are basically running them locally. Chuck notes, "Based on the fact that we can be more flexible in our scheduling and our deployment of students in the classrooms, we are finding that we are not going to have to replace as many of the older machines—we can just get rid of them. This is a real win for us also."

Hands-Off Maintenance

Chuck achieved one of his biggest goals: to reduce the IT support and maintenance of each classroom. With the brand new Windows 7 image and the App-V client, there has been very little need for technicians to go back to the desktop and do any support work.

When updates are needed, "There is no interruption of classes, and that has been a big positive. We have the ability to deliver a new application within 24 hours to all of our campuses, which has been a real win," said Chuck. "I think we are going to have more progressive education because of it."

Chuck also uncovered some unexpected benefits from choosing nettops. "We discovered we had a dramatic reduction in the heat in our classrooms. Our old machines were generating a lot of heat; now it's a lot more comfortable in the classroom. We are also definitely pulling less power. Because we have between 200 and 500 computers at every one of our 20 locations, it's been a nice win to take advantage of that savings, too," said Chuck.

The new nettops also provided some much needed space-savings. "It really makes a difference to have a smaller footprint—students need room for books and notes. The nettops have made our classrooms more attractive and are the right solution," said Chuck.

An Easy "A"

When asked to grade the project, Chuck gives PC Connection high marks. "It's been wonderful. First off, the classrooms look a lot better. There is more space for our students and instructors, and the technology is much improved. They can do their work better and faster and are considering new applications that they feel comfortable working with now that we have these nettops in place. It's been a very positive, well-received project.

Chuck continues, "The team at PC Connection is really great. They have helped us with so many aspects of this project. They identified the different [product lines] that they felt were worth considering for our classrooms based on the needs we had identified, and they have been instrumental in managing our relationship with Microsoft. They are an A+ team. We do all of our business with PC Connection and feel they support our needs well."

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—Chuck Farraj, CIO
Remington Colleges, Inc.

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