

Reaseheath College comes top of the class for rapid PC deployment



“We can confidently state that the Acronis software does everything it promised. It has improved the efficiency with which we carry out our regular and annual PC maintenance programmes, helping us maintain the college’s high standards and ensure its smooth running” **Rob Brown.**

Introduction

Located in Cheshire, Reaseheath is one of the UK’s most successful agricultural colleges, offering further education, higher education and part-time adult leisure courses to around 6,000 full and part-time students. Last year, the college undertook a £50 million expansion project to increase its range of courses, improve teaching resources and enhance the IT facilities increasing the number of communal campus PCs to more than 400 and building seven new IT classrooms.

Each communal computer is used by lots of students studying different courses throughout the year, so key application and system settings are regularly changed often causing the machines to run inefficiently.

In addition, although college guidelines state that work should be saved on the network rather than on workstation drives, many students inadvertently save downloads and files on C: drives, causing the machines to slow down and, sometimes, crash.

Rob Brown, head of technical services at the college, notes that this was one of the main reasons why the IT team had to reformat all of the college’s PCs every summer holiday. “We routinely cleared all of the data from the local drives, reset the operating system settings and reinstalled applications using the original software disks,” explains Brown. “It took a long time, but it was the most effective way we knew to ensure the machines operated efficiently and didn’t crash while students were using them during term time.”

Under Pressure

The IT team already had concerns about how long the reformatting process took. However, when Reaseheath College took the decision to allow external organisations to run summer school classes outside of term-term, Brown knew that it was definitely time to find a faster and less labour-intensive solution. In addition, the IT team had been notified that, because of the completion schedule for the new campus library, the building’s 62 new PCs would have to be configured in a three day window just ahead of the new term adding an increased burden to already stretched IT resources.

With a smaller window of time in which to carry out essential reformatting, deployment and maintenance, a manual reinstallation process was no longer an option.

Organisation:

Reaseheath College

Sector:

Education

Key Challenges:

- Quickly deploy and configure new PCs as part of a £50 million expansion of the college campus
- Rapidly re-install PCs in the event of system failure or corruption
- Cut time required to reconfigure existing machines

Environment:

400 PCs running on a combination of Windows XP, Windows Vista and Windows 2003 platforms

Solution:

400 licenses of Acronis Snap Deploy for Workstation

Business Benefits:

- Time taken to reconfigure a single PC cut from half a day to just 20 minutes
- 62 new PCs configured and deployed to a new site in three days
- Over 200 student PCs imaged in 7 days
- Up to eight weeks’ worth of IT deployment time saved each year



Image is everything

Brown realised that an alternative solution had to be found as manually reformatting each PC on the campus and preparing new ones for use simply wouldn't be possible within the smaller timeframe.

Therefore, after carrying out some initial research, he decided that disk imaging software would be the most cost-effective and efficient solution. At that point, Brown decided to take a free 30 day trial of Acronis Snap Deploy for PCs, having ruled out Symantec's Ghost offering as prohibitively expensive.

"I was immediately impressed with Acronis' software," notes Brown. "We could create a single master image and use that to carry out a complete PC reconfiguration including the operating system, settings and applications which is far quicker than a manual reinstall or initial set-up," he continued. As a result the college's IT team invested in 400 Acronis Snap Deploy licenses for Workstation.

Top Marks

Acronis Snap Deploy saves Reaseheath's IT team as much as eight weeks in PC deployment and reconfiguration time each year. "Prior to purchasing Snap Deploy, a single PC redeployment would have taken my team about half a day now we can complete it in approximately 20 minutes, with no time wasted hunting around for, and then installing, individual software disks and system settings," comments Brown.

This time saving is vital in helping the college's IT team keep its PCs up and running. All student data is backed up to networked servers, so if a PC fails, no data is lost, but all applications and settings on individual PCs may have to be reset. In this scenario, Snap Deploy enables the IT team to reconfigure all applications and settings with the minimum effort. "It's simply a case of getting the master disk from our drawer, putting it into the offline PC and carrying out the reinstall," Brown notes.

Snap Deploy also allows the college's IT team to configure and deploy new PCs in 20 minutes. "Prior to purchasing Snap Deploy, we could only manage four or five deployments per day, which would have made it impossible for us to install the 62 new library PCs in the allotted three day window."

However, using Acronis Snap Deploy, the IT Team were able to prepare the master install disk before the PCs even arrived on campus, then they had the machines delivered straight to their designated positions within the library and then configured them making the whole process much more efficient and straightforward.

Brown notes that Snap Deploy is extremely simple to use. In fact, the team now has the time and resources to deal with other more pressing tasks which previously had to take a backseat during busier periods.

About Acronis®

Acronis Inc. is the leading provider of storage management and disaster recovery software. Its patented disk imaging and management technology enables corporations and individuals to move, manage and maintain digital assets in physical and virtual environments. With Acronis' backup, recovery, server consolidation and virtualisation migration software, users protect their digital information, maintain business continuity and reduce downtime in computing environments. Acronis software is sold in more than 180 countries and available in 13 languages.

For additional information please visit <http://www.acronis.eu>



UK and Northern Europe:

Acronis Ltd.
Tel.: +44 203 1760340

Central and Eastern Europe:

Acronis Germany GmbH
Tel.: +49 89 6137284-0

Southern Europe and MEA:

Acronis SAS
Tel.: +33 1 42815531