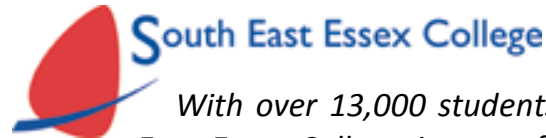


Essex college upgrade biggest in Europe!



With over 13,000 students and 950 staff, South East Essex College is one of the largest and most successful in the south east. The college has gained Mac Academy status, is a Nikon Academy, was the first FA Chartered Status College in Essex and has a Sony-approved TV studio. It was also the largest education establishment in Europe to install the new Microsoft Windows 7 Operating System prior to general release.

Jim Prendergast of DMS and Microsoft's Jamie Burgess show students Belinda Lingood and Luke Emery some of the features of Windows 7

South East Essex College in its new, state of the art building in Southend, was one of the first in the UK to use Windows 7, Microsoft's new operating system. The College was chosen to be upgraded before the software's general release as part of a plan to provide early feedback to Microsoft and became Europe's largest education installation.



End of XP

The college's Windows XP network had proved successful and stable, but with support coming to an end, a successor had to be found. Vista was sidelined as it was felt to be too bulky and had too many incompatibilities with existing applications. So in early 2009 Craig Willcocks, South East Essex College's Information Systems Manager began to evaluate Windows 7 as a Beta release.

Around the same time, Design and Management Systems were evangelising Windows 7 in their Network Seminars. Jamie Burgess, Partner Technology Specialist at Microsoft, delivered the Windows 7 message at DMS' Kent seminar in April

which Nick Halling, Senior Network Support Advisor at South East Essex College, attended.

The seminar focused on Microsoft networks and DMS' ability to install, support and add value solutions to those networks.

Nick recommended to Craig that Server 2008 and Windows 7 was the route to take for the college and Craig began dialogue with DMS.

Early Adopter Status

Because of its size and the enthusiasm for the new technology, Jim Prendergast R&D Director at DMS, successfully proposed the college as a candidate for Microsoft's early adopters feedback programme. Jim said "With lots of part time courses, each workstation is used by multiple students during the week for a variety of applications. This means issues will be found quicker than in a more consistent user environment".

Leaving 2003 Behind

Nick was already familiar with AppV application deployment and had basic experience with XP clients. The first task for South East Essex College was to update the domains from Microsoft Server 2003 to Server 2008 and all domain controllers from Server 2003 to Server 2008 so the total environment was moved away from 2003.

MDT 2010

MDT 2010 was installed on a deployment and configured, loading Windows 7 as well as various drivers and applications. This was a basic installation for primary trials. Base applications were deployed via MDT for compatibility testing and basic task sequences were set up in MDT to test machines within one site.

Testing and Tailoring

There were two or three days testing and tailoring on a variety of machines used within the college. Although MDT was used, it asked too many questions and required a lot of user intervention. South East Essex College aimed to get as many tasks automated as possible, to the point where MDT simply asked for the name of the computer and applications needed. Not even a password was required for this process.

During this process, the answer files were tailored to adjust items like location and environment settings.

Live Trials

After all of this, live trials were conducted, including:

- *Checking final hardware compatibility with the new OS.*
- *Checking deployment speed in different areas of the college.*
- *Deploying applications to test compatibility.*

Following these trials, Craig was confident that the OS was solid and would run all applications.

Jim Prendergast, Technical Director at DMS provided specialist task sequences to silently deploy applications such as .NET:

- *Several generic applications were deployed on all workstations during operating system install.*
- *AppV base applications were installed via MDT to enable full application deployment.*
- *Workstations were locked so there were no security issues during the building process.*

Final Trials

These live trials highlighted a VLAN issue and the switch was soon adjusted for correct referencing. After further adjustments to the task sequence to increase the speed of deployment, a team toured the workstations to press F12 and build the workstations for the final trials.

Any software not put down as task specific was installed using the flexible “optional extra software” feature for applications.

The OS went down with all basic applications, with complicated applications requiring AppsV. College staff found the benefit of Apps V for quickly changing or upgrading applications to be priceless!

Deployment in Record Time

Craig and his team completed the upgrade during the summer break. It took just three days to deploy the new operating system, a marked improvement on the three weeks the college had taken to roll out Windows XP four years earlier.

Jim said “This is by far the best Microsoft OS I have seen in my 30 year career in IT. Plus, Microsoft’s network tools make the upgrade so much faster and simpler than ever before, leaving a network that is easier to maintain”.



Nick Halling Senior Network Support Advisor, South East Essex College

Jim Prendergast R&D Director, DMS

Jamie Burgess Partner Technology Specialist, Microsoft

Craig Willcocks Information Systems Manager, South East Essex College

Education as Usual!

When students arrived for the autumn term, Craig expected to deal with some queries or glitches following the upgrade. “We didn’t receive one call, as far as the college is concerned, it’s education as usual, said Craig, “the only comments we had were from staff who were delighted that the college is leading the way with new technology, something that students appreciate too”.

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