NW Kent College finds a perfect partner

The top performing general further education college in Kent and South East London, North West Kent College offers a wide range of academic and vocational courses for over 4,500 full-time students. The college also has an excellent Higher Education provision, linked with the University of Greenwich, plus part-time courses and a variety of commercial training programmes for business.

New facilities at its Dartford and Gravesend campuses enable the college to offer courses for everyone. For those who wish to gain the skills to get their first job, or others seeking high-level professional qualifications,

preparation for promotion, a career change or return to work, NWKC has a well-deserved reputation for delivering friendly, high quality training by industry experts.

Suffering with an Old and Slow Network.

The IT department at North West Kent College serves over 6,000 full and part time students with around 2,300 workstations. The IT facilities were struggling to cope; 10 year old computers chewed their way slowly through applications, the network had problems and its inefficiencies were a great cause of frustration for staff and students. An invitation to a DMS Network Seminar was taken up by IT Manager Barb Playfoot who sent a couple of her senior technicians to find out more.

Re-using Existing Hardware

Sam Dissanayaka and Darren Parker were impressed by the knowledge and expertise of the DMS team. At a subsequent meeting on site, DMS offered to save the cost of replacing the College's 10 year old PCs by using them as raw terminals, with data and applications held on the network. This would mean the workstations would run much faster and the only investment required would be two new host servers and the time to reconfigure the network.

Identifying and Overcoming Problems

The theory of the new network was straightforward. DMS had done similar configurations many times before, saving schools and colleges thousands of pounds by stripping down and reinvigorating ancient PCs to run applications remote. However, it was only when DMS started work that the extent of the problem with NW Kent's existing setup was discovered; issues with the College's Active Directory and replication and authentication problems between Domain Controllers were identified.

Gold Partner Status

Barb had met some of the DMS team years ago, when they worked for a different company; "I was confident DMS would stabilise the authentication process" said Barb, "Jim Prendergast and his team don't give up easily".
However, after some time, DMS had to put in a call to the Microsoft Gold Partner Helpline, which was escalated to the highest level as Microsoft struggled to help.
"DMS Gold Partner status is a real benefit, says Barb, "Although it is a mark of DMS' dedication that they found and implemented their own solution to get us up and running before Microsoft could offer a fix!! And, they only charged us for a fraction of the time they spent on the issue. The final outcome has meant a significant improvement to our network and an ongoing dialog with DMS to look at further measures including extending our Wi-Fi network and implementing the DMS NetFlow system, to manage user and group profiles on the network."

A Different Experience

"I have worked with different support companies over the years and been tied in to contracts which guarantee income for them, but not support for us; promises go undelivered and extra costs appear from nowhere! My experience with DMS is completely different. We buy blocks of support days in advance, using them whole or in part as needed. Often calls to DMS for advice that gets us out of day to day trouble are free and there are no hidden charges."

A True Partnership

"It feels like we are in partnership with DMS, not just a business relationship. In the process of providing support and assistance, DMS engineers train and empower our team to manage by themselves; their willingness to impart knowledge is refreshing, others would be more possessive, for fear of losing future work."

CS-A NWKent College