



HOLMESDALE TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE GETS LESSON IN SAVING TIME AND MONEY FROM KACE™



KBOX™ helps “School of the Future” manage software and inventory without student downtime

BACKGROUND

Holmesdale Technology College—located in beautiful Snodland, Kent, about one hour’s drive southeast of London—is a secondary school that serves more than 850 students ages 11 to 18. Designated as a high performing school by government authorities, the college is on track to achieve official status as a “school of the future” for information technology by early 2007. As part of its mission, the college promises every student access to a computer every day. A three-person IT staff supports the 1,000 computer users on the campus, including students, faculty and staff. While the college boasts some of the latest computer technologies, the support team felt like ancient Romans when it came time to deploy new software. They walked around on foot and performed their tasks by hand. There had to be an easy way to automate software deployment and IT inventory tracking.

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– Gareth Waghorn,
Information Communication
Technology Strategy Manager,
Holmesdale Technology College

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CHALLENGE

Managing student laptops a time-consuming chore

An annual challenge for the IT support staff was how to manage software updates on college notebook computers. With 180 new students entering college for the first term, and 220 other notebooks that were due for security updates and application patches, the head of the IT support group described the situation as “completely not feasible.” Gareth Waghorn, Information Communication Technology Strategy Manager at Holmesdale, said his team needed to recall 400 notebooks from previous users and update the machines without any downtime for the new students who needed them immediately to start lessons.

“It was horribly frustrating,” Waghorn said. “Once we started the updates, the students were without notebooks. The teachers complained, ‘Where are the notebooks?’ All the while we’re doing this, we couldn’t focus on other things we need to do like server maintenance, stuff that our job is really about. We needed something automatic that ran in the background without interrupting classes.”

Lack of update control meant lost lesson time

Holmesdale manages the college network using Microsoft’s Active Directory. They manage 600 client workstations plus 400 notebooks and 10 servers. The servers all run Windows Server 2003 and the clients run Windows XP Pro, with standard applications such as Microsoft Office XP and Adobe Professional 8. The networking hardware is primarily Cisco. They rely on the McAfee suite for virus protection.

Active Directory can help on software deployment, Waghorn said, but it was not much better than manual updates. Active Directory did not give IT staff any control over when software was installed. So a 500Mb installation that takes up to 25 minutes, might start right as a class began. “In a 40 minute lesson, there goes your lesson,” Waghorn said. “Then the blame comes back to us.”

KACE TIME: HOLMESDALE COLLEGE

DEPLOYMENT
One day

TRAINING
8 hour web-based training

TIME AND MONEY SAVINGS

- 1.2 Mb application deployed in less than three minutes
- Student downtime effectively eliminated
- Accurate inventory and warranty information without manual tasks
- Scripting speeds printer installation

Software management solutions required costly network overhead, dedicated server

In 2006, the college support staff organized a four-month search and evaluation project to find a better solution for software deployment. Quickly the evaluation team agreed that a software-only approach had too many problems for their network. One of the biggest problems was the overhead placed on the network. And each required a dedicated server.

SOLUTION

Time, money saving KBOX appliance recommended by AppDeploy.com users

Surfing the Web, Waghorn found a resource online called www.appdeploy.com where other systems administrators talked about their shared problems. KACE and the KBOX seemed to be an increasingly popular solution recommended by visitors to the site.

"The reports on there from other people said the KBOX is what you want, this is fantastic," Waghorn recalled. "What led us to KACE was the appliance approach. The server and software came in one package. We went out with an open mind and came back with KACE."

Online demonstration and attractive pricing speed KBOX selection, purchase

Waghorn completed an online form and quickly a local UK based reseller contacted him. John Jones from Ambien Technology worked closely with KACE to set up an online demonstration for Waghorn and priced a system for the college. "The demo made it clear how easy the KBOX made things," Waghorn said. "With other solutions, you had to know certain strings of information, weird things. With this, a Web page and no special software literally told you everything you wanted and 100 times more. It was so different in comparison to everything else we had seen."

Fast deployment and training saves time, delivers quick return

In less than 10 days from ordering the KBOX, Waghorn had the system up and running. The college took advantage of the KBOX JumpStart Program and in four web-based training sessions, the appliance was configured and deployed. "It was fantastic," Waghorn said. "Dialed into the college network, KACE configured the KBOX and walked us through everything there and then. Everything we did was recorded as video files that we saved. If we ever need to do this again, we can reload those video files and go through it. It was fantastically easy."

1.2 Mb application update in less than three minutes

The first software program deployed through the new KBOX was a 1.2Mb application. Waghorn pushed it out in less than three minutes across the college network. "KBOX ran the app to every single machine with no error," Waghorn

said. "It worked the first time perfectly. You configure it once and test and send out live and you don't have to worry about it. It just works. It's like having another member of the team, whose sole purpose is to install software."

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Time savings result in additional enhancements

Waghorn initially used the KBOX for software deployments only. Then he quickly upgraded and purchased the scripting module to help automate printer installations. "It's all done by the KBOX," he said. Next Waghorn is considering the KBOX™ Help Desk Module. "The help desk ties everything into one portal," he said. "So the KBOX can tell you what is installed on a machine, status of any outstanding issues, and what problems that have been reported in the past. You can pick up absolutely everything in one place."

KBOX provides money saving college-wide inventory and warranty tracking

Waghorn and his team already rely heavily on the inventory feature of the KBOX. The college hardware is almost all supplied by Dell. The KBOX captures the Dell tag numbers in the BIOS and can link back to the Dell web site for a complete report history so that Waghorn always knows what systems are under warranty, or not. "Instead of having to walk through the college to get tag numbers, we just search through KBOX and off you go!"

Timely support, even an ocean away

Although KACE is headquartered in the United States, Waghorn said the technical support keeps him loyal to his KBOX. "Anything we need, we drop them an email and we get the help," he said. "Often it's 45-minute responses. A lot of these things we spend money on and don't get good support. But support is definitely there with KACE."

SAVE TIME AND MONEY WITH KBOX SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT APPLIANCE

Faster System Evaluation and Justification

- Online capabilities demonstration and affordable pricing

Accelerated System Test and Acquisition

- System installed in less than ten days from order

Streamlined Deployment and Training

- Plug and play installation and operation
- Onsite web-based training

Immediate ROI

- 1.2 Mb application deployed in less than three minutes
- Student downtime effectively eliminated
- Accurate inventory and warranty information without manual tasks
- Scripting speeds printer installation



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