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CUSTOMER SUCCESS

Delsea Regional School District

Refreshing Client Systems Four Times Faster with Solutions from Symantec, Dell, and NetX Inc.

Challenged with 1,300 endpoints to manage, Delsea Regional School District's IT staff spent a lot of time driving between buildings and visiting machines. Summer client hardware refreshes took three months to complete. After implementing an endpoint management solution from Symantec, Delsea's team of three people was able to complete the refresh fourfold faster. Other benefits include cost avoidance on one full-time technician salary, over 99 percent patch compliance on endpoints, and projected payback in less than one year.

Share and Share Alike

To drive down costs and still provide effective technology to teachers, faculty, and students, many school districts are adopting shared services models for IT. By pooling funds with other school systems and leveraging a centralized service model, districts can often benefit from lower costs, improved service, and more current technology.

Delsea Regional School District provides IT services to three school districts in southwest New Jersey: Delsea Regional High School District, Franklin Township Public Schools, and Elk Township Public Schools. There are 1,300 desktops and laptops in the district—all leased through Dell Financial Services—distributed across nine buildings. Managing those endpoints is the responsibility of Greg Taylor, shared services technology coordinator, and two desktop support technicians.

Until recently, managing, remediating, and refreshing those client systems was a major challenge.

"Everything was basically sneakernet," says Taylor. "We did a lot of traveling between buildings, and we had to jump through all kinds of hoops to get to someone's computer and work on it. We had a program that allowed us to turn on certain computers from remote, but there was no guarantee that remote wake was enabled on any given endpoint, so it wasn't very reliable."

ORGANIZATION PROFILE

Website: delsearegional.us
Industry: Education
Headquarters: Franklinville, New Jersey
Employees: 3,100 students; 292 faculty and staff members

SYMANTEC SOLUTION

- Endpoint Management
- Data Protection

Why Symantec?

- Proven success at other school districts
- Specialized version for Dell clients
- Appliance-based solution available through Symantec partner NetX Inc.
- Reliable data protection



A Client Management Solution in Five Days

Like most school districts, Delsea staggers its client hardware refreshes, replacing a few hundred machines every summer as lease terms expire. “Depending on the number of machines, that was traditionally a monumental task to get them all imaged, rolled out, and properly patched and configured,” says Taylor.

As the 2008-2009 school year came to a close, Taylor decided to look for a better way. “We had a major refresh coming up, so I decided to look for a client management solution that would allow us to provision the hardware faster and allow our existing staff to be more efficient,” he says. “We didn’t have the budget to add another desktop support technician.”

Taylor evaluated a product from KACE, but decided on Altiris™ Client Management Suite for three reasons.

“Number one, I’ve seen Altiris Client Management Suite in action at other districts, and I knew that I would be completely happy with it,” he says. “Number two, I was able to get a specialized version of the product, called Altiris Management Suite for Dell Clients, that builds upon the existing free hardware management capabilities of Dell Client Manager. Third, I was able to get a preconfigured, appliance-based version of the solution through Symantec Platinum partner NetX Inc. It’s built around a Dell PowerEdge 1950 server and Microsoft SQL Server 2005. So we didn’t have to install an operating system and load SQL—it was all done ahead of time.”

Within five business days, Taylor and his staff were fully trained on the solution, and Altiris agents had been pushed out to 750 endpoints—the original number budgeted.

“NetX left us feeling comfortable, and they were very efficient. The difference in how we’re spending our time now is remarkable—it’s like typing a document on a computer versus carving it out on a stone tablet,” says Taylor. “We started seeing value from the solution right away, so we were able to get

SOLUTION AT A GLANCE

Key Challenges

- Reduce staff time spent managing desktops and laptops
- Complete summer hardware refreshes faster
- Manage endpoints from remote to cut down on site visits
- Avoid adding desktop support staff

Symantec Products

- Altiris™ Management Suite for Dell Clients
- Symantec Backup Exec™ for Windows Servers

Symantec Services

- Symantec Essential Support Services

Symantec Partners

- Dell (www.dell.com, Symantec Global Strategic Partner)
- NetX Inc. (www.netxinc.com, Symantec Platinum Partner)

Technology Environment

- Server platform: Dell PowerEdge servers running Microsoft Windows Server 2003
- Applications: Pearson PowerSchool Premiere; Microsoft Exchange Server 2007
- Database: Microsoft SQL Server 2005 and 2008
- Tape library: Dell PowerVault TL2000

budget approval to roll it out to the 550 client machines at Franklin Township as well.”

Fourfold Faster Client Hardware Refreshes

Taylor and his staff can now image PCs and deploy software to client machines directly from their desks in the data center. This capability allowed the team to install and configure 192 new Dell clients in just three weeks.

“Our student assistants physically set up the machines and change the boot sequence to boot from the network,” Taylor explains.

BUSINESS RESULTS AND TECHNICAL BENEFITS

- Fourfold faster client hardware refreshes (3 weeks vs. 3 months)
- Cost avoidance on one full-time technician salary
- Over 99% patch compliance on endpoints (improved from 75%)
- Projected payback in less than a year
- 99% backup and recovery success rates

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Greg Taylor

Shared Services Technology Coordinator
Delsea Regional School District

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“When we see a machine come up, we can image it right from our desks, and deploy software to multiple endpoints simultaneously. We used to have to set up a lab of computers, do the configurations in the lab one-by-one, and then take the machines out to the classroom. With Altiris products, we were able to accomplish a rollout in three weeks that would have previously taken three months.”

The IT team can now troubleshoot computers remotely over the WAN and deploy new software without driving out to the campuses. “One of the schools is a 12-mile round trip for us,” says Taylor. “Instead of tying up two or three of us to go out there, it’s now a one-person job that can be done from the data center. Altiris products are going to cut down on our travel by at least 25 percent, if not by half.”

Over 99 Percent Patch Compliance, Improved Security

Patching compliance and endpoint protection have improved significantly at Delsea, since Altiris Management Suite for Dell Clients eliminates the manual process of gathering compliance data by automatically scanning managed computers. A centralized aggregate view of all available patches identifies open vulnerabilities ranked by severity.

“We’re pretty close to 100 percent patch compliance now, whereas before we were around 75 percent or less,” says Taylor. “I also discovered through the reports that we had 15 endpoints that had no antivirus protection, for whatever reason. So I created a task within the product that if it finds an unprotected computer, it will automatically install antivirus. So now I can say I know for a fact that we have antivirus on every computer.”

99 Percent Backup and Recovery

Success

For many years, Delsea has relied on Symantec Backup Exec™ to protect its critical data. Backup and recovery success rates are well over 99 percent, according to Taylor.

“Backup Exec has been great,” he says. “It’s always performed well for us. We’ve never had any software-related problems with backups not completing or anything like that.”

Symantec Basic Maintenance Services provides next-business-day response should Delsea need assistance with its Symantec solutions.

Projected Payback in Less Than One Year

With the time-saving features of Altiris Management Suite for Dell Clients, Delsea will not need to hire an additional desktop support technician in the near future—meaning that payback on the solution will be achieved in less than one year, says Taylor. Altiris may also allow the district to help the community by providing shared IT services to other local entities as well.

“As all the districts expand, we have talked about possibly providing services to the local municipality—the police department, for example,” says Taylor. “How far we can stretch as humans is very limited. Symantec is helping us stretch farther.”