



Windows Vista Customer Solution Case Study



Customer: Ball State University

Web Site: www.bsu.edu

Customer Size: 20,000 students, 3,500 faculty and staff

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Education

Customer Profile

Established in 1918 in Muncie, Indiana, Ball State University is best known for its programs in architecture, exercise science, teaching, anthropology, entrepreneurship, and communications. The university is also widely recognized for using technology to further academic objectives, including citations for its broadcasting program, its online nursing program, and a 2003 digital-media sharing and storage project.

Software and Services

- Products
 - Windows Vista™ Enterprise
 - Windows Vista Ultimate
 - 2007 Microsoft® Office system

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University Enhances Computer Security, Simplifies Licensing, Optimizes IT Talent

“Together, support for out-of-the-box compliance and [User Account Control] will help us virtually eliminate help-desk calls related to security, which now represent at least 25 percent of all desktop-support issues.”

David Los, Lead Data Protection and Enterprise Security Engineer, Ball State University

Ball State University decided to resolve challenges surrounding its inconsistent client computing environment through a campuswide deployment of the Windows Vista™ operating system. With this deployment, the university anticipates fewer compatibility problems, a 50 percent reduction in the time required to upgrade computer labs, a 25 percent reduction in help-desk calls, and more productive use of IT professionals' time and talents.

Business Needs

Located in Muncie, Indiana, Ball State University is a state-run undergraduate and graduate institution that is widely recognized for using technology to further academic objectives. In keeping with this tradition, Ball State IT executives recently decided to address several issues concerning the university's client operating system before those issues became problems.

For one thing, the university needed a more uniform client operating-system technology and licensing infrastructure. As David Los, Lead Data Protection and Enterprise Security

Engineer at Ball State, explains, both the Windows® XP and Windows 2000 operating systems, in various versions and under various licensing arrangements, were in widespread use among students, faculty, and staff. This situation led to difficulties with application compatibility and software support.

The university also needed a platform for launching a major mobility project in the school of nursing, a nine-week pilot in which students receive course content through handheld devices. This project is designed to show the benefits of handheld content



delivery, including freeing students from having to carry multiple heavy textbooks and making content more easily accessible and upgradable.

The management and maintenance of client-deployment images was another challenge. Each of the 14 computer labs that are under central IT management at Ball State had a separate core image, and IT staff had to deal with all 14 images every time the labs needed upgrades. This made upgrades so time-consuming that they could be performed only when classes were out for a week or longer.

Finally, the university needed a more practical approach to client-computer security. At the time, users were responsible for installing and configuring their own security solutions. This resulted in frequent calls to the help desk.

Solution

Because Ball State was already using Microsoft® operating-system products, Los and his colleagues decided that the most expedient way to address its IT issues would be through a universitywide upgrade to the Windows Vista™ operating system and the 2007 Microsoft® Office release. To gain early access to the software, they joined the Microsoft Technology Adoption Program for Windows Vista and, as of early 2007, had deployed that operating system to 100 computers used mostly by IT staffers and other early adopters.

The deployment is slated to reach 20 to 30 percent of the university's 11,000 computers by late 2007. Through a Microsoft Campus Agreement licensing program, the deployment also is being made available to all of the university's 20,000 students.

Benefits

Los and his colleagues anticipate significant benefits from the deployment of Windows Vista and the 2007 Microsoft Office system in the areas of productivity, security, and IT process efficiency.

■ A more consistent application platform.

Los says that once the team has deployed Windows Vista and the 2007 Microsoft Office system widely, the university will enjoy a more uniform and consistent application platform. This is expected to reduce application-compatibility problems and thereby increase information integration and productivity for students, faculty, and staff.

■ Stronger mobile environment.

Windows Vista will play a central role in the nursing-school project that will deliver course content through handheld devices. With the operating system's Sync Center, the students will be able to synchronize content easily between their desktop and their laptop and handheld devices.

According to Kay Hodson-Carlton, nursing professor, "This will make students more eager to participate in the project, which in turn will help prepare them for real-world clinical environments where handheld devices are becoming the norm."

■ More efficient image management.

With the Windows Imaging Format, IT professionals will create, manage, and deploy a single core image for all 14 shared labs. According to Los, this will make image management easier and upgrades much timelier.

"Instead of having to wait for a week-long break to deliver upgrades to the labs, deployment teams will be able to do it over a long weekend," Los explains. "This

will help us deliver new functionality more frequently, which helps increase user productivity."

■ A smarter approach to security.

Thanks to the support of Windows Vista for what Los terms "out-of-the-box compliance," users will no longer have to install and configure their own security solutions. "This will relieve the help desk of frequent calls from users stymied with these tasks," he says.

Los anticipates related benefits from use of the User Account Control (UAC). "With UAC, we can remove the need for administrator rights on desktops, enhancing protection against the inadvertent downloading of viruses and other malware," he says. "Together, support for out-of-the-box compliance and UAC will help us virtually eliminate help-desk calls related to security, which now represent at least 25 percent of all desktop-support issues."

For Los and his colleagues, a common theme runs through most of the benefits expected from the deployment of Windows Vista and the 2007 Office system: an IT infrastructure that will ease the support burden on help-desk and other such professionals.

"As a result, Ball State IT professionals will be free to work on more value-added services, such as a much-anticipated rollout of [Microsoft Office] Communications Server 2007," Los says. "It only makes sense that these talented, hard-working individuals be able to apply their skills proactively in helping the university utilize technology to further educational objectives. That is, after all, what they're here for."