

Wheldon School and Sports College

Case Study

Schools are requiring access to more sophisticated applications and operating systems. The hardware costs and the time spent managing this requirement can be prohibitive. But, Wyse Zero client computing offers a low-cost, low-maintenance solution to this problem, as Wheldon School and Sports College discovered.

Thin Client Strategy

Wheldon School and Sports College is an 11-19 school that serves the area of Carlton in the north east of Nottingham. The school has now been rebuilt following a devastating fire in December 2002. The new complex provides an exciting learning environment and offers a suitable venue for the high quality education provided by Wheldon's dedicated staff. Now with over 1,000 users (800-900 pupils and 200 staff) the school relies heavily on its ICT investment to ensure student progress and improved exam results.

“The Wyse thin clients have enabled us to meet all our objectives at a fraction of the cost”

After the fire in 2002, the school's ICT staff were faced with the task of rebuilding their technology infrastructure from scratch. They adopted the traditional PC approach and configured and installed over 200 PCs across the site. As time went by they began to experience problems with ageing PCs and looked to thin clients to provide an alternative. A successful trial of 20 Wyse Winterm 1200LE devices in the summer 2004 led to a further 200 thin clients being installed at the end of that year and a decision to base the school's future ICT strategy on thin client computing.

Zero Client Computing

Chris Pearson from Wheldon School commented, “The Wyse thin clients have enabled us to meet all our objectives at a fraction of the cost of providing traditional PCs. But, since their initial implementation in 2004, both operating systems and applications that require a great deal more computing power have been introduced. This meant that there were certain applications that could not be run on the thin clients. So when we heard about the Wyse Zero Client Computing initiative we were naturally interested to see how it could benefit us.”

The Zero Client Computing initiative is a response to the demand for a thinner, data-less and easier to manage thin client. It meets the needs for reduced hardware running costs and provides a richer PC user experience with simplified IT management. These objectives are also achieved without requiring an operating system, applications or configuration settings to actually be stored on the device itself. Instead, this information is stored on a secure server and provisioned securely via the network when the device is powered on.

Viewpoint

“Wheldon School and Sports College provides an exciting learning environment and offers high quality education provided by Wheldon's dedicated staff. Now with over 1,000 users (800-900 pupils and 200 staff) the school relies heavily on its ICT investment to ensure student progress and improved exam results.”

**Chris Pearson
Wheldon School**





Conclusion

By implementing a Wyse Zero Client Computing infrastructure, Wheldon School and Sports College is starting to enjoy the benefits ranging from reduced hardware costs through to minimised ICT staff time having to be spent on day-to-day management and administration.

Zero Client Computing provides a compelling argument to be considered by every school.



Easier to install and manage

Pearson said, "We realised that Zero Client Computing could help us overcome the processing and memory problems that feature-rich applications and operating systems were causing our existing thin clients and ageing PCs, so we commissioned 35 of the new Wyse devices together with Wyse WSM."

"The systems were easy to install in a fraction of the time it would have taken us to build the same number of PCs"

Wyse WSM packages and delivers a standardised operating system and the necessary applications independently to a stateless thin computer. The Windows Server-based services manage the streaming of the operating system and applications. The thin computer then runs the operating system and applications locally, but all of the files and applications reside on the server, where they are much easier to back up, manage, and maintain. This enables Wyse WSM to deliver a rich operating system such as Windows XP together with the power and flexibility of a full PC to the user; but at the same time giving ICT staff the manageability they want from a traditional thin-computing infrastructure.

Pearson continued, "The systems were easy to install in a fraction of the time it would have taken us to build the same number of PCs. The server has a centralised Web-based management interface that takes no time at all to set up and it also has an easy-to-use operating system image-creation tool that allows us to quickly create and deploy operating system images. What's more everything worked first time!"

An application packager that allows ICT staff to create and deploy application images provides the flexibility to deploy applications independent of the operating system. This functionality has allowed Wheldon to standardise operating system images across the school and deliver applications based on user roles and responsibilities. The ICT staff can now also easily provision new applications or updates to existing applications without having to modify the operating system image.

Zero day-to-day management

WSM dramatically reduces the time and costs associated with deploying and maintaining software across the school. By deploying operating system and applications patches centrally, downtime and ICT staff time is greatly reduced. Each end user simply reboots their Zero-client device to ensure that the client software is upgraded to the latest patch level. No scripts or scheduling are needed.

"The new thin clients require virtually no day-to-day management because of Wyse WSM", concluded Pearson. "If there is ever a problem, we can quickly recover from hardware failure simply by replacing the device with a new one. All user data, applications, and operating system will automatically download to the new device when it is next switched on.

"I have no doubt that Zero Client Computing is the way forward, not only for Wheldon school but any educational establishment"

The time saving on its own is sufficient to make our investment in them worthwhile", he continued, "but their massively increased performance has enabled us to run applications that we could not previously have considered on a thin client. We are now using them for high-resource applications like video editing and Web site creation as well as digital photograph editing and their performance is as good as a high cost and high specification PC.

Also because they are stateless they do not emit the same amount of heat as a PC. This has meant that the rooms they are installed in are a much more pleasant place to work and we do not have to worry about air conditioning in summer, as well as helping to reduce the school's carbon footprint.

I have no doubt that Zero Client Computing is the way forward, not only for Wheldon school but any educational establishment that wants to reduce costs and increase the manageability of its ICT investment."

All images courtesy of Wheldon School and Sports College

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