



School Story

Microsoft in Education

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- Michael Heath, Marlborough Boys' College

When the servers at Marlborough Boys' College needed to be replaced the school had the perfect opportunity to take a new approach to technology.

Early in 2015, Marlborough Boys' College moved its IT system into the cloud – doing away with their existing in-school server infrastructure. This is a growing trend for schools around the country, as it saves them money and gives them access to new software and services.

When Michael Heath, Deputy Principal of Marlborough Boys' College, needed to upgrade his school's servers he followed the traditional process of issuing a tender to IT providers. But unlike some of his counterparts, Heath didn't just ask for a cost estimate to replace his servers like for like. Instead Michael Heath asked, 'is there a better way to do IT?'

"We were looking for a modern system that would support our students' learning and also help our teachers. We also wanted something that could adapt with us over the next couple of years. You instinctively know that IT is changing, but we weren't sure what this meant for the school.

"I knew about cloud computing and had read quite a bit about it on a personal level. But I thought our school was too big and complex for the cloud and I'd been told our internet connection couldn't handle it. But we found out this wasn't the case, because Network 4 Learning provides all schools with uncapped fast data," says Heath.



Overview

Industry: Education

Company Website:

<http://www.pcmmedia.co.nz/>

Customer: Marlborough Boys' College

Organisation Size: Large (1100-1200 students)

Country or Region: New Zealand

The I.T Team : pcMedia

Software and Services

- Microsoft Azure
- Office 365

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Michael Heath, Marlborough Boys' College

Shifting from servers to the cloud

With just shy of 1,200 students and staff, Marlborough Boys' College in Blenheim ran a traditional server system like many other schools around New Zealand still use. All documents and data were hosted onsite and external IT providers visited the school 32 hours each week to maintain the PC fleet and servers.

After running the tender process, Marlborough Boys' College partnered with pcMedia in Blenheim. pcMedia have a lot of experience working with businesses in the region and their approach was to take the best of what businesses were doing and adapt it for the school.

Lee Harper from pcMedia says, "We're seeing time and time again that schools can benefit hugely from adopting IT practices that are traditionally thought of as being 'business IT', particularly when it comes to the cloud. Our business customers have been much quicker to move to the cloud than the schools in our area. Schools risk missing out. As with business customers, cloud technology for schools will open the door to greater functionality at a lower cost, plus give both teachers and students access to data in ways not possible before."

The company moved Marlborough Boys' College onto a hybrid solution, which centred on moving servers into Azure, Microsoft's cloud computing platform, and a smaller number of servers remaining in the school. This opened the door for Office 365, Microsoft's cloud productivity platform, which New Zealand schools get for free.

Office 365 provides e-mail services for the college as well as file storage for both the staff and students through SharePoint and OneDrive. These products enabled the college to no longer provide a large volume of on-site storage for files, as there is unlimited storage with OneDrive.

Leaning on Network 4 Learning

As part of the solution pcMedia redesigned the college network to take full advantage of the college's Network 4 Learning internet connection. The college has now

removed all additional content filtering and firewalling devices, instead purely relying on those provided by Network 4 Learning. This has not only sped up the network, but also made it more reliable and saved costs.

New approach to teaching

Heath says moving to the cloud has given his teachers a more dynamic IT system, which can keep up with everyone's needs.

"We've now got a modern learning environment to base everything off. Now our students can collaborate on projects together and see their changes in real-time. And when they go home they can access their school work via the internet. It means they can pick up where they left off in the classroom and continue learning," says Heath.

Office 365 gives the school's teachers and students access to email, websites, online document editing, messaging and web conferencing. There are also a plethora of templates and training modules for teachers to use.

Harper says the other benefit of not having onsite servers is there is now little risk of the school losing documents or other data because it's also securely stored in the cloud.

"Also cloud services provide a staging environment to test new programmes and upgrades of programmes without impacting the existing one. This heavily reduces the chances of any downtime on the network – which is especially important for schools," says Harper.

Moving back room resource to the classroom

Heath says switching to the cloud has changed the school's approach to technology and means in the future they could let students bring their own devices to school. It also allowed them to shift resource the server room would normally soak up into delivering more to students.

"Switching to the cloud has saved our school in the vicinity of \$70,000 to \$100,000 in the first year. After realising we had this budget spare, we decided to buy 100 new computers for students. That's been the most obvious and immediate benefit of this change. Rather than spending money sorting out our server, we've spent money on devices for students.

"Our ongoing costs are significantly reduced using cloud computing. We spend around a half of what we used to spend on external IT support now we've got our current IT system," says Heath.

After seeing the transformation at the school Harper has a clear message for other schools: "For any school thinking about buying a new server, I recommend they stop and look into moving to the cloud."

With Microsoft Azure and Office 365 schools can take advantage of enterprise-grade cloud services, and remove the management effort and costs that comes with traditional on-premise technology infrastructure.

Microsoft Azure

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For more information go to:

www.azure.microsoft.com

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