

IBM the head of the class after smooth PC rollout for NSW Department of Education and Training

Overview

■ **The Challenge**

As part of its Technology for Learning Program, the New South Wales Department of Education and Training (DET) needed to roll out PCs to more than 2,200 schools across the state. The rollouts needed to be individually coordinated with each school to minimise disruption to everyday teaching activities.

■ **The Solution**

IBM® assembled a large logistical project management team and a custom database tool to manage project reports, rollout schedules and resources. Before deployment, IBM and technology partner Lenovo installed the Department's standard operating environment on each PC and added tools that registered each one on the network.

■ **The Benefits**

IBM shortened the rollout period, initially expected to take several months, to just six weeks. By delivering and installing the PCs, IBM reduced the workload on already busy teachers, allowing them to focus on their classroom responsibilities. Teachers have welcomed the continuity of the standard desktop environment across different classes and schools. IBM also provided all schools with an onsite, next-business-day warranty and technical support.



About the NSW Department of Education and Training

The NSW Department of Education and Training delivers high-quality education services from early childhood through to post-compulsory education and training. The Department meets the learning needs of children, young people and adults, and addresses training needs in industry.

The Department provides services for around 70 per cent of all school students in New South Wales at more than 2,200 locations throughout the State. It coordinates the public education and training system in New South Wales, including pre-school, compulsory schooling from Kindergarten to Year 10 and senior secondary education, for approximately 760,000 students.

The Department is also responsible for TAFE NSW courses, adult and community education courses, migrant English programs and post-secondary art courses.

Technology for Learning: a massive rollout

The New South Wales Department of Education and Training (DET) is the largest single organisation, public or private, in Australia and manages one quarter of the NSW state budget. It is responsible for the education of 760,000 students at more than 2,200 schools across the state. Access to reliable, current and relevant technology is a vital part of a quality education.

Since 1997, the NSW Government has run a program called Computers in Schools to provide centrally funded computers to all public schools in the state. In 2005, the program was renamed Technology for Learning. This marked a significant change in the way the department procured its PCs. It significantly reduced the number of vendors supplying systems so it could develop a consistent standard of technology across all NSW schools.

“For the first time, we also asked vendors to be part of the installation process,”

– Garth Newton, Executive Services
Manager of the Information Technology
Directorate at the NSW Department of
Education and Training.

“School staff had varying levels of technology skill, so it made more sense to ask the vendors to unpack the boxes, plug in the equipment, install the Department’s custom security bolt, connect it to network and ensure everything was working properly.

IBM and its hardware partner Lenovo were selected as the major supplier of PC hardware as well as installation and maintenance services. In 2005 alone, IBM, Lenovo and the Department’s other technology partners were scheduled to roll out 20,000 computers to more than 2,200 schools.

With schools distributed around New South Wales, some in small, remote communities, delivering and setting up these PCs was a significant challenge. Each school needed to be notified in advance of the installation to minimise disruption and the new PCs needed to be ready for students to use within a day.

“When we roll out PCs for corporate clients, the total number of machines might be similar, but they’re all within one or two buildings,” said Mark Rugless, Business Unit Executive for End User Services, IBM. “In this case, we had to roll out more than 2,200 locations in a very tight time frame. It required all our project management and planning skills to make this work effectively.”

IBM delivers project management skills and methodologies as well as PCs

This vast PC rollout required a large logistical project management team that at its peak included five project managers, 10 project administrators and 110 technical installers. IBM developed a customised database tool that allowed project reports, deployment schedules and resource management to be published to a secure website accessible to IBM and the Department. This provided daily updates on the progress of the deployment.

IBM worked with the Department to develop a deployment schedule and used automated tools to initiate contact with each school and keep them updated of the proposed rollout dates for their area. IBM then contacted each school to confirm dates and adjusted the schedule to meet individual needs. On arrival at each school, IBM staff worked with their nominated contact to minimise disruption to classroom activities.

“The bottom line was achieving greater consistency and providing schools with a service, rather than just a device.”

– Garth Newton, Executive Services Manager of the Information Technology
Directorate at the NSW Department of Education and Training

“Schools are not a standard workplace environment, so it’s quite difficult to get access overnight or during holidays. IBM arranged a convenient time for each school, got the PCs up and running and then moved on to the next school. The fact that it went so smoothly came down to solid communications. IBM was always enthusiastic about making sure the service was delivered in the best possible way.”

– Garth Newton, Executive Services Manager of the Information Technology Directorate at the NSW Department of Education and Training

IBM and Lenovo pre-installed the Department’s standard operating environment on each PC and added tools that registered each PC on the network and notified the Department’s IT team over the network that it had been installed.

“We learned a lot about logistics management and the value of using automated tools to manage the vast number of relationships and interdependencies in a project like this,” said Weber. “We also ran roadshows to let the schools know what to expect ahead of time. We’ll definitely be doing that again in the future.”

Fast rollout, minimal disruption, responsive service

Through this coordinated effort, IBM completed the rollout in six weeks; it was anticipated to take several months.

“We drew on our experience with large, distributed rollouts such as bank branches for ANZ Bank, regional depots for Country Energy and county courthouses for the NSW Attorney General’s Department,” said Weber. “At the project’s peak we were installing up to 2,000 PCs each week with an average of less than 10 at each school.

By delivering and installing the PCs, IBM reduced the workload on already busy teachers, allowing them to focus on their classroom responsibilities and minimising disruption to the schools’ day-to-day activities.

“Teachers have welcomed having a standard environment within each school and across different schools,”

said Newton. “Now if they change classes or schools, they’re much more likely to find a similar set-up which makes the change a lot less daunting.”

IBM and the Department negotiated a four-year onsite next-business-day warranty for all the PCs delivered to schools, ensuring the availability of vital educational resources to even the most remote schools.

“IBM has been working closely with us to make sure we get the best out of that warranty support,” said Newton. “We recently finished working with IBM technical services to establish a direct link between IBM’s helpdesk system and ours to increase the automation of case reporting and closure.”

With orders in place for another 12,000 PCs by the end of 2006, the Department is looking forward to a trouble-free implementation thanks to the efforts of IBM.

“It’s a complex process and it’s about managing expectations and doing things the best we can in the time we have available. We’ve been very happy with the results.”

– Garth Newton, Executive Services Manager of the Information Technology Directorate at the NSW Department of Education and Training

For more information

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