



Microsoft Windows Server 2003 Customer Solution Case Study



Challenger TAFE Sheds Incompatible Infrastructure for Microsoft Solution

Overview

Country or Region: Australia

Industry: Education

Customer Profile

Challenger TAFE provides vocational training to more than 25,000 students across 10 industry training centers in Western Australia.

Business Situation

The TAFE's Novell networking and email infrastructure did not integrate easily with business systems and had limited support. Licensing costs were also cutting into the organization's bottom line.

Solution

Challenger TAFE decided to replace its Novell environment with a comprehensive, integrated and scalable Microsoft infrastructure. The implementation includes a broad range of Microsoft server products and desktop applications.

Benefits

- Significant reduction in server numbers.
- Improved service and support.
- Lower licensing costs.
- Secure remote access for staff.
- A central store of data and knowledge.

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Graham Foster, Director, Information Systems, Challenger TAFE

Vocational training institution Challenger TAFE (Technical And Further Education) had 10 centers operating on Novell networking and email technology. This infrastructure did not integrate easily with its key business systems. The IT department was also concerned by the small number of Novell support partners in Western Australia. To deliver efficient communication and collaboration, Challenger TAFE decided to migrate to a Microsoft platform. It is working Microsoft Gold Certified Partner ISA Technologies to roll out a wide range of Microsoft server technologies across the 10 TAFE sites, Microsoft® Windows Server® 2003, Microsoft® Exchange Server 2003 and Microsoft® Internet Security and Acceleration (ISA) Server 2004. Challenger TAFE is beginning to reap the rewards with easier management and better alignment to industry partners. In addition, licensing fees are lower and its hardware needs have been reduced.



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Situation

Challenger TAFE (Technical And Further Education) has more than 25,000 students across 10 specialist training centers in Western Australia. The curriculum focuses on vocational education and training, with over 140 careers to choose from in areas as diverse as accounting, aquaculture, childcare, floristry, hospitality and tourism.

Challenger TAFE's existing networking and email infrastructure, based on Novell NetWare and GroupWise, was not well supported by its business partners.

“Because we ran a Novell network, we found it difficult to integrate with applications based on Microsoft® Windows® Active Directory®, which many of our business partners were using,” says Graham Foster, Director, Information Systems, Challenger TAFE. “In addition, with staff often supervising students in the workplace off campus, we needed to provide remote access to corporate information while maintaining security.”

Teaching and administrative staff relied heavily on email, but Challenger TAFE was not confident of the capabilities or future viability of its Novell GroupWise system.

“In theory, GroupWise works with the Microsoft® Office Outlook® client and can synchronize calendars and contacts with mobile devices such as smartphones, but in practise we were having all sorts of problems,” says Foster. “It also did not provide the advanced functionality users were asking for, such as secure instant messaging.”

The Novell system was incurring additional licensing and operating costs. IT staff also had problems finding support staff and gaining access to training.

“Over the years, we had built strong relationships with a Novell support organization, but it was occasionally difficult to access support and maintenance, particularly if we had a crisis,” says Foster. “We would have to travel interstate for training or wait long periods. Our product integration and technology roadmap were looking problematic.”

Challenger TAFE staff were using a variety of email clients and office software, adding to the support woes of the IT department. Backing up data across 10 sites over a wide-area network was another time-consuming task.

Challenger TAFE decided that it needed a server infrastructure that could provide better integration with third-party systems and help reduce its management costs.

Solution

Challenger TAFE decided to overhaul its technology environment and move to a Microsoft platform.

“We investigated solutions from various vendors and it was clear Microsoft was the dominant player in the market, offering excellent integration with other applications and superior solutions,” says Foster.

In January 2006, Challenger TAFE undertook a proof-of-concept project to help it develop a design, co-existence and migration strategy from Novell to Microsoft servers and client technologies.

“The proof of concept showed us how Microsoft technology could reduce our operational costs by halving the number of servers in our environment, reducing support and training requirements and implementing an integrated technology platform,” says Foster.

After the successful pilot project, Microsoft called in Microsoft Gold Certified Partner ISA Technologies to help Challenger TAFE replace its Novell infrastructure with a range of Microsoft server products and desktop technologies across the 10 sites. At time of writing, two campuses had made the switch successfully.

Microsoft Windows Server 2003 forms the foundation of the solution, managing and controlling access for local campuses and remote staff. Windows Server 2003 also provides a scalable, security-enhanced Web platform, simplified branch server management, improved identity management and efficient storage.

“Implementing Windows Server 2003 allows us to use Microsoft’s distributed file system to open up our network while ensuring content is secure,” says Foster. “Staff across all 10 sites can see content hosted at other sites.”

On this platform, Challenger TAFE overlaid a management system using Microsoft® Operations Manager 2005. The management package allows IT staff to determine the root cause of a problem quickly, resolve it and restore services. This has improved the efficiency of the TAFE’s IT operations by reducing the time IT staff spend dealing with crises and giving them more time to deliver enhanced services to staff and students.

Challenger TAFE also implemented Microsoft Exchange Server 2003 and Microsoft® Live Communications Server 2005 to improve communication and collaboration. To address concerns about internet-based security threats, Challenger TAFE installed Microsoft Internet Security and Acceleration (ISA) Server 2004, an integrated edge-security gateway that helps protect IT environments

while giving users fast and secure remote access to applications and data.

As well as making these extensive changes to its server environment, Challenger TAFE also migrated all its desktop PCs to Microsoft® Office 2003. Standardizing on a single office environment reduced management and support problems for the IT department.

Using the Microsoft Active Directory technology built into Microsoft Windows Server 2003 allows Challenger TAFE’s IT staff to administer TAFE-wide policies, deliver applications to many computers quickly and simultaneously and apply software updates across the organization.

Benefits

Lower Licensing and Hardware Costs

Implementing a comprehensive server infrastructure based on Microsoft software will allow Challenger TAFE to reduce its Novell licensing costs.

“While Challenger TAFE is saving money, the organization’s new licensing agreement allows it to take advantage of a range of Microsoft technologies,” says Saviel. “It can utilize the new Microsoft® Windows® SharePoint® Services, the new Exchange Server 2003 capabilities for messaging and Live Communications Server 2005.”

Switching to Microsoft server technology has allowed Challenger TAFE to consolidate its server infrastructure. It anticipates that the new solution will halve its server hardware requirements.

“We centralized our email in a single store which improved manageability and backup performance,” says Foster. “One Microsoft Exchange Server 2003 has replaced the 10 Novell servers we used previously.”

“With the remote access capabilities of Microsoft Exchange Server and the protection of Microsoft ISA Server, we’re confident sending teachers out into the field with wireless laptop PCs.”

Graham Foster, Director, Information Systems,
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Secure Remote Access

Microsoft Exchange Server 2003 gives Challenger TAFE staff anywhere, anytime access to their email, calendars and contacts. Built-in Microsoft® ActiveSync® technology makes it simple to synchronize handheld PCs and smartphones.

“Microsoft Exchange Server 2003 offers pure and easy integration with mobile devices,” says Foster. “Staff can now access critical information wherever they are.”

The Microsoft infrastructure has also ushered in an exciting new style of teaching.

“There is a move in education to teach at remote sites,” continues Foster. “On-the-job experience is a vital component of vocational training, which means teachers often need to access course material while visiting students who are working off campus.

“With the remote access capabilities of Microsoft Exchange Server 2003 and the protection of Microsoft Internet Security and Acceleration Server, we’re confident sending teachers out into the field with wireless laptop PCs.”

A Widely-accepted Standard

Challenger TAFE now enjoys better integration with third-party systems, allowing the organization to align itself with new industry initiatives. The broad availability of skilled technicians and training is a relief for the IT department.

“If we ever have problems, we know help is easy to find with many Microsoft-certified providers located in Western Australia like ISA Technologies,” says Foster. “We won’t be left waiting for support and we can send people down the road for training.”

Using Microsoft technology also benefits Challenger TAFE’s students, better preparing them for the world after study.

“As a vocational training organization, our aim is to prepare students to get a job as soon as they leave,” says Foster. “Most jobs students go to will involve using a Microsoft environment, so it is appropriate that students use these products while studying so when they leave they have experience in these applications and are familiar with the Microsoft user interface.”

Centralized Data and Knowledge

Challenger TAFE uses the Distributed File System built into Microsoft Windows Server 2003 to replicate data across its wide-area network, allowing all data to be backed up at a single point.

“The efficiency of our backup process has increased dramatically because we’re now backing up all our sites from a single local file store using Microsoft file replication,” says Foster.

Challenger TAFE is currently trialing a portal based on Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007. This will ultimately provide a centralized repository for staff and students to place and access content.

“We’re impressed by the way Office SharePoint Server 2007 is integrated with Microsoft Active Directory, so the roles and responsibilities you create in Active Directory work automatically in the portal as well,” says Foster. “As a result, we only need to manage a single set of users and access rights and this then flows on to other solutions.”

Extending the Boundaries of the Classroom

Challenger TAFE is now well positioned to introduce new learning platforms, such as the Microsoft® Learning Gateway framework. This

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For more information about ISA Technologies products and services, call (618) 9470 4411 or visit the Web site at: www.isatechnologies.com

For more information about Challenger TAFE products and services, visit the Web site at: www.challengertafe.wa.edu.au

powerful education portal helps people share information and collaborate on projects from a single point of access. It helps educational institutions get more out of their existing applications by using familiar tools and extending the value of their Microsoft technology investments.

“Lecturers will ultimately be able to build sets of content and issue these to particular groups of students,” says Foster. “They can also develop online assessments for students to complete.

“Students who want to study from home can download the content they need and complete the relevant assessments. They can complete the course materials and assessments progressively and have their progress monitored constantly. Microsoft systems are definitely changing the way we teach.”

Microsoft Windows Server 2003

The Microsoft Windows Server 2003 family helps organizations do more with less. Now you can run your IT infrastructure more efficiently, build better applications faster, and deliver the best infrastructure for enhancing user productivity. And you can do all this faster, more securely, and at lower cost.

For more information about Windows Server 2003, please visit: www.microsoft.com/windowsserver2003

Software and Services

■ Products

- Microsoft Office 2003
- Microsoft Exchange Server 2003
- Microsoft Internet Security and Acceleration Server 2004
- Microsoft Operations Manager 2005
- Microsoft SQL Server 2000
- Microsoft Virtual Server 2005
- Microsoft Windows Server 2003 R2
- Microsoft Live Communications Server 2005

- Microsoft Windows Active Directory
- Microsoft ActiveSync
- Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007

Hardware

- HP ProLiant ML350 G5 server
- x15 HP ProLiant DL380 G4/5 servers

Partners

- ISA Technologies

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