

From classroom chaos to classroom calm



Managing IT in an educational environment

While education today demands that pupils acquire IT skills to prepare them for most jobs and other aspects of modern life, managing school computer networks can be daunting. In particular, the resources required for sufficient skilled IT technicians to maintain and police the network, are not available in most schools.

The introduction of *net-runna Enterprise*, from *Advanced Network Technologies Ltd*, has provided several schools with greatly enhanced low operating cost network management.

The problems with 'school network management' are exaggerated because of the size and diversity of the networks which involve many hundreds of PCs and workstations, all varying in age; and where the temptation felt by some students to download or upload illegal or unauthorised software has resulted in the need for a round-the-clock solution which ideally, at the touch of a button will rapidly roll-back a machine to it's IT predetermined state.

School requirements for network management are simple:

- Low investment, low operating costs, easily managed by one or two people
- High and flexible performance to keep a complex system in operation, including disaster recovery and virus removal
- Rigorous control over desktop, software and hardware standards with access denials and hardware asset tracking
- Easy to implement upgrades and revisions

In addition, remote management facilities are a distinct advantage as most schools do not have the resources necessary to have a number of staff dashing around to fix hardware and software problems, or to outsource their IT to a private business.

Commercially available network management systems are too often designed for large business users – in the education sector organisations may require bespoke programming and most available packages tend to be too limited to cope with the school's requirements. Additionally - most are priced outside the available school budgets.

St Olaves background and issues

Founded 430 years ago, St Olave's and St Saviour's Grammar School Foundation pride themselves on keeping up-to-date with the educational needs of pupils; however, the school is typical in the sense that, the management of over 140 workstations and 700 users with only one technician working alongside one ICT manager has become increasingly difficult to maintain and control.

David Thomas, the ICT Manager, identified the key issue as the critical need to maintain the network availability throughout the year to prevent interruption to the curriculum whilst keeping the cost of having expensive technical help on site, or on call at a minimum.

With more than 20 years experience in business and local government IT management David has benefited from generous operating budgets in the past; however today challenge involves finding innovative yet affordable solutions that fit within the limitations of the school's less than generous budget. The adopted solution needs to be state-of-the-art yet affordable network technology, using smart, intuitive software, which helps to avoid additional investment in the form of further IT personnel.

Evaluating commercial solutions

David evaluated several widely available business solutions - the standard approach offered a variety of technical software tools bundled in a bespoke package, but which would have a variable look and feel. Other systems included *Microsoft's Windows*-based toolkit, which he found complex, expensive and required significant tailoring. A number of others like *Symantec's Ghost*, only provide a part of the required LAN management - e.g. it would only control desktop loading.

Introducing *net-runna*

net-runna was introduced to the ICT Manager at *St. Olaves* by the ICT manager of another school, already reaping the benefits. *net-runna* offered several distinct advantages including:

- A single modular Deployment and Management platform
- Auto-heal capability preboot prior to desktop loading
- High availability providing syllabus delivery continuity
- Disaster recovery

These last three features offered massive savings on support calls alone.

Going live

After a live site demonstration, David was convinced that, in *net-runna*, he had discovered a product that would deliver and at an affordable price. *net-runna* offered the best possible support platform: affordable (compared with the other options), intuitive, simple to understand and use offering a selection of required deployment features amongst many other benefits – in short *net-runna* provided the perfect solution.

“We have found *net-runna* to be intuitive, robust and reliable. It has revolutionised our working methodology. We can now look forward to easily maintaining our work-station environment and have virtually eliminated our old fire-fighting approach which involved utilising up to five students a day to help re-build desktop machines in their lunch break. Now we don’t need student help and, most importantly, have released our limited resources to address significant issues, including strategic questions, which previously were not getting a look in”. David Thomas ICT Manager *St. Olaves*

Features and Support

net-runna provides the *St Olave’s* LAN with the following features: Imaging, Ultra Rapid Desktop Deployment & Commissioning, Disaster Recovery & Business Continuity, Server Commissioning & Recovery, Optional Desktop Lockdown, Preboot Auto Heal and Virus Elimination, Software & Hardware Auditing, Application Denial, Intelligent Resource Management.

“The support we have received from *ANT* has been exemplary, easily on a par with the best I have seen in my years in the IT industry. We look forward to working with *ANT* in the months ahead to create a “best practice” environment”. David Thomas ICT Manager *St. Olaves*

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