EDUCATION

Fairfax County Public Schools — Big Ideas, Big Solutions for a Big District

Customer
Fairfax Country

Challenge
Needed Automatic
CD and DVD
Production

Solution
Rimage Producer™
with Everest® printer

Just a few miles across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C., suburban Fairfax County Public School (FCPS) district includes more than 230 schools with 165,000 students and 22,000 employees, making it one of the 15 largest districts in the country. At least 90,000 computer workstations are used in classrooms throughout the district. FCPS manages these systems by using a small number of standard configurations of software and curriculum materials. A manageable number of 30 master configurations are preloaded by their PC vendor on new computers. When a system needs to be rebuilt, a copy of the hard disk image is restored to the computer. "We have curriculum-specific disk images of the hard drives," said David Kuckenbecker, computer systems programmer for FCPS. "We have one image for elementary schools, but six or seven for each middle school and more than 20 for each high school. Clearly, we don't have the time or manpower to update every district computer manually."

The Challenge

Even after streamlining the installations with the standard hard disk images, it was still challenging to provide copies of the masters to all 230 schools and 400 information technology (IT) employees — not to mention additional discs for new software updates.

"We first tried a 'just in time' model," Kuckenbecker said, "through which we would fulfill e-mail requests manually using a basic CD duplicator."

"As demand grew, it became clear that we needed a solution that had the intelligence to produce discs automatically," Kuckenbecker said. "We wanted a system we could use to initiate a job from anywhere in the district."

The Solution

The FCPS IT team researched several disc publishing systems at the FOSE (Federal Office Systems Exposition) trade show.

"Rimage was the only vendor that had the integration tools and expertise to help us solve our problem," said Kuckenbecker. Rimage representatives showed Kuckenbecker the Producer, a top-of-the-line, high-volume disc publisher with fully automatic network operation and dual CD and DVD capabilities.

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Computer Systems Programmer,
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RIMAGE®

David Watson, a computer systems programmer from the district's IT department wrote a custom application that helped streamline the district's workflow and disk image fulfillment process. Written using the Rimage software development kit (SDK), the new application created a fully automatic process by which administrators anywhere in the district could request disk images via the Web, instantly triggering the Rimage system to make DVDs. Each DVD is labeled with the name of the disk image, an internal request number and the recipient's name.

"Now, all that's required is someone to put the discs into our internal mail system," Kuckenbecker said. "Even with a 400-person IT department, we are up to our eyeballs in work, and anything to make our jobs easier helps save the district time and money."

In addition to copying hard disk images, FCPS also uses a Rimage solution to duplicate new operating systems and licensed software like Adobe Photoshop or Microsoft Office on an as-needed basis. A second Rimage Producer unit housed at the district's operations center burns mastercopies of all the district's licensed software—then, whenever new licenses are purchased,the district simply can produce more copies without waiting for new software.

The Results

Return on Investment

The district has seen significant process improvements and timesaving enhancements thanks to the district's ability to produce CDs and DVDs automatically. Not only is it easier for district staff members to request software, the Rimage system also has helped streamline the process of updating existing disk images.

For example, the district is beginning to switch to a new antivirus program for the new school year. Because of this one relatively small software change, the district must update more than 75 current and legacy disk images, a task made much simpler by employing a Rimage digital publishing solution.

"With a Rimage system, we are at the leading edge of new technology, and everyone in the district is able to jump right in without spending days and weeks duplicating software," Kuckenbecker explained.

Looking Forward

In the future, Fairfax County Public Schools plans to incorporate its Rimage solution into its audiovisual production process, using one of the district's networked Producer systems as an output device for live and taped programming originating at the district's television studio. Other departments, such as the district's in-house graphic design and marketing teams, have expressed interest in using the Rimage solution for producing support materials.

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