Pcounter

one solution

City College Southampton

Case Study
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About City College Southampton

Based in the south of England, City College Southampton provides exceptional vocational and academic training for young people and adults. Learner success rates are classed as 'outstanding' and the college ranks in the UK's top 10 per cent.

Delivering educational excellence in a first class learning environment is key to the college who have invested £34m in new buildings, state-of-the-art equipment and top of the range IT resources across their 2 campuses. Currently it employs 640 staff, and caterers for approximately 7000 students.

The Problem

City College have been successfully using Pcounter software for student print and copy accounting for the past 9 years but had never monitored staff. Part of the problem was that most offices had their own networked laser printers and stand alone photocopiers.

Targeted to reduce paper consumption and drive usage of the college intranet ICT Support Manager Andy May took the opportunity to discuss the situation with AIT at the BETT show in London. AIT identified the need to re-route jobs to more cost effective devices and use Pcounter to account for all print and copy across the fleet for all users.

Following a tender process the decision was taken to introduce Sharp multi-function printers (MFPs) devices throughout the college. Andy describes the experience below.

"As we were already using Pcounter on the student domain, we wanted to expand it to incorporate the staff domain and integrate the MFP's all at the same time. This would require installing Pcounter embedded software for Sharp enabling the integration of the MFPs and also configuring Pcounter for staff accounting" Andy explained. "I was assured this was going to be a straight forward rollout. How right they were!"

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Andy May
ITC Support Manager,
City College Southampton

Ease of Implementation

"That was probably one of the most straight forward install and configurations I have seen. The regular upgrades take less than 10 minutes. The software does exactly what it's meant to. The self-explanatory interface and configuration options are easy to implement and allows great flexibility of use."

"2 new virtual server's were setup (1 for staff and 1 for students), and Pcounter was reinstalled along with a few test printers. The Pcounter embedded for Sharp install/configuration was straight forward using the documentation on the AIT website. Although Andy recalls "I did initially come across one problem where copy jobs were being accounted for twice. After a brief call to the support line, this was easily resolved as I had missed an inevitable check box....!!!"

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Reasons for adding to the solution

"We received complaints following the implementation of the MFPs that the login procedure (using username and password) was more time consuming than previously. AIT quickly provided a solution in the form of a Mifare card reader," said Andy.

"Since the project began we have also implemented:

- Network scanning control and workflow for most areas of the college from the MFP's. Scanning to the network has also supported our 'green initiative'.

- Web balance display on all student machines to display their available Pcounter credit prior to printing. This reduced IT Helpdesk enquiries drastically.

- Introduced 33 card readers to the MFPs removing the need to manually login each time. Users self-register their mifare campus cards at the MFP first time of using which was painless with very few calls to the IT Helpdesk and resulting in very happy staff.

- Pcounter Popup rolled out effortlessly using a startup script enabling users to see the cost of their job and balance before they print, forcing them to confirm or cancel the job. The idea being to make staff and students 'think before they print'."

Scalability of Pcounter

"Pcounter is without a doubt scalable - you don't need to implement every feature from the off. As the college is moving towards a more paperless environment with its successful VLE and Staff Intranet, Pcounter has allowed us to implement its many features as and when we have required them. For instance we moved our printers over one by one, we love that you can do one bit at a time and it's a genuinely effortless download, install, job done. We deployed 16 card readers in less than an hour! We now have a much better control over annual print/copy costs.

The Benefits & Results

"The total cost of ownership has always been a key benefit with Pcounter. Not only is it a fairly inexpensive solution, its ease of configuration and simplicity has kept it at the heart of our printing strategy.

"Biggest hit? - users love the card readers they are so flexible and quick, they are saving so much time. A big winner for IT and the college. Having one on trial was a big bonus as we really tested it, moving it around the campus - people wouldn't let us take it off!"

"Using Pcounter we have developed a reporting system that brings all the print and copy totals together from both servers and our reprographics department and for the first time the college can actually centrally monitor ALL of its output and prevent them from spiralling.

The result - a reduction of 40% in printing and an increase in use of the intranet. We motivate and inform people with regular Intranet news items and the Pcounter Popup messages have really encouraged individuals to take responsibility for their own print costs."

"The solution really does work for us and is inexpensive. Every time it just works!"

Andy May
ITC Support Manager,
City College Southampton