

Case Study.

CAE turn networking into learning with Weston College.

With an opportunity of a new build and the complication of an existing infrastructure CAE has implemented a scalable, secure and flexible network that supports the ambitious growth of Weston College by enhancing the learning environment for both staff and students.

Key Facts

- One of the fastest growing Further Education Colleges in the UK
- 12,500 students and 600 staff
- Supporting learning opportunities in North Somerset, UK and Europe
- ICT key to enriching the learning environment
- 7 campus sites in the UK
- 800 full and part-time courses



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The Challenge

With an opportunity of a new build campus, Weston College wanted to revamp critical elements of its IT infrastructure in order to provide a high quality and consistent ICT learning environment for students and teaching staff, irrespective of campus location. In doing so, this would make a major contribution to their vision of offering education services that utilised technology best practice and would lay firm foundations for future plans.

The complication of existing systems and limited in-house resources meant Weston College required assistance with the design, implementation and management of the new solution. Specifically a new network infrastructure would be needed, fully integrated with legacy systems as well as a robust disaster recovery solution to maintain services in the event of outages. Weston College would need a proven integration and delivery partner to help address these challenges and realise the potential benefits of using the latest technologies.

After careful consideration, CAE Technology Services was selected to deliver the project. CAE's early commitment to the design process and understanding of the College's objectives were a crucial factor as Weston College ICT Manager, Mark Hill explained, "CAE demonstrated that they cared about what we wanted to achieve to a level that matched our own people. This coupled with technical excellence was a winning combination".

The Solution

Following a thorough evaluation of the various options available Weston College chose to standardise on a network solution leveraging Cisco technologies. With CAE's guidance Weston College went through a number of critical steps to successfully deliver the project:

Audit: A comprehensive audit, coupled with a relationship built up over a number of years, gave a clear understanding of the existing network environment and, more importantly, established a baseline to measure future enhancements and return on investment.

Design: The network design maximised the opportunity to converge voice, video and data so that management costs were reduced and the scalability of current and future applications could easily be accommodated. The provision of security appliances and wireless meant flexibility on and off campus could be granted with confidence.

Important considerations:

- Revamp of existing systems to provide a high quality and consistent ICT learning environment
- Limited in-house resources required support with design, implementation and management of a new solution
- New network infrastructure and DR solution integrated with legacy systems required

Services delivered:

- Network Audit
- IP Telephony
- Remote Access
- Security
- New network build integrated with legacy technologies
- Wireless
- Network Maintenance
- Outsourced IT Helpdesk
- Disaster Recovery

Implementation: The physical delivery of the project was managed in stages to minimise risk. Also, in order to eliminate any disruption to teaching, a challenging timeframe was set. The new campus network was delivered to exacting standards taking advantage of the opportunity presented by a clean slate.

The success of the first phase meant legacy systems and over 3000 network ports across seven sites were seamlessly integrated within just four weeks with any necessary downtime being meticulously planned around College operations.

Disaster Recovery: The risk of failure of any single network component was covered by a resilient / redundant design with any hardware failure backed by a CAE onsite response time of four hours.

In the event of any major outage at site level procedures were implemented, backed by the network design, that facilitated immediate failover to other campus sites providing uninterrupted services.

Technical support: As a result of the wide range of technology implemented CAE was able to tailor a shared service for support that ensured a high level of technical help that is extremely cost effective and totally complementary to College resources. Support services included helpdesk, remote access and onsite options all governed by a flexible SLA to give peace of mind through response levels based on business requirements.

It works

Weston College ICT Manager Mark Hill went on to explain “CAE were a pleasure to deal with. Their ability to deliver an end to end solution with a leading manufacturer in Cisco, backed by a proven record as a Gold partner, gave us a single supplier that promised the best results in terms of functionality and integration.”

Weston College now has a network platform that meets current and future needs, enhancing exciting opportunities for learning. CAE Account Manager Rob Groves summarised the overall solution commenting, “It is always a great experience working with an organisation that knows what it wants to achieve and understands the value that IT can bring. Weston College now benefits from a network infrastructure that is scalable, secure and backed with outstanding service that will definitely facilitate plans for growth.”

Weston College is already looking to the future; “Our core network represents a great step in enhancing our investment in technology and has opened up further projects such as digital media systems that I very much look forward to being able to work with CAE on” said Mark Hill.

Technology deployed:

- New network based on Cisco systems
- Converged network, using Catalyst 4500 and Catalyst 3750 switches
- State of the art IP Telephony based around Cisco Unified Communications manager
- Firewall and remote access based around Cisco Adaptive Security appliance
- Campus wide Unified Wireless solution, with lightweight access points

Benefits:

- A telephone system that would add capacity to the existing system without any loss of functionality
- Provision of secure remote access to key systems for both staff and students
- Addition of flexible and roving connectivity across campus
- Ability to integrate with legacy systems to extend return on investment
- Provision of resiliency and disaster recovery to guarantee uninterrupted learning

About CAE Technology Services

CAE is a leading IT value added reseller offering a unique combination of solutions and services in all core infrastructure areas including networking, datacentre, virtualisation and client. Recognised by industry awards and as one of the best companies to work for by the Sunday Times, CAE has a demonstrable track record of technical excellence and outstanding customer service.

Our knowledge. Your business.

It works.