Community colleges save more than $1 million by switching from Cisco to HP ProCurve

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Ron Smith
Director of Information Systems
West Valley-Mission Community College District

HP ProCurve customer case study: West Valley-Mission Community College District

Industry: Education

Objective

Provide high-speed bandwidth and wireless connectivity for students and faculty at two community colleges in California's Silicon Valley.

Approach

Implemented an advanced HP ProCurve network that features a 40 gigabit backbone and full wireless connectivity.

IT improvements

- Increased network bandwidth by 4,000 percent.
- Expanded wireless coverage.
- Improved network monitoring and security.

Business outcomes

- Saved $1 million in acquisition and implementation costs.
- Saving $130,000 annually on maintenance costs.
- Improved flexibility for future technology and school initiatives.

Overhauling an aging infrastructure

West Valley-Mission Community College District comprises two higher education institutions in California's Silicon Valley. West Valley College in Saratoga and Mission College in Santa Clara serve more than 40,000 people annually through on-campus, off-campus and online courses and seminars.

In recent years, the district's aging network infrastructure was inhibiting desired improvements that would keep West Valley-Mission on the leading edge of higher education. The schools wanted to upgrade their email, document management and online learning systems. Unfortunately, the district's Cisco-based network was not up to the task. It didn't possess adequate bandwidth and couldn't support applications that utilize shared servers.

Making matters worse, the seven-year-old network equipment had become obsolete and was no longer supported by Cisco. Yet West Valley-Mission was still paying $130,000 each year on Cisco SMARTnet maintenance services.

"We were paying a lot for a network that couldn't address our needs," says Ron Smith, Director of Information Systems for West Valley-Mission Community College District. "So we decided to upgrade and embarked on an exhaustive evaluation process."

Smith and his team didn't want to simply bring the district's network up to date. They envisioned it as a foundational pillar of West Valley-Mission's future. High bandwidth, advanced wireless connectivity, exceptional security and sophisticated network monitoring were top priorities. Prospective vendors were evaluated on performance, price and industry leadership. District leaders even solicited the expert advice of industry analysts at Gartner.

"HP ProCurve was the obvious choice across the board," Smith says. "Their networking gear is exceptionally well built, easy to manage and extremely cost effective. And Gartner spoke very highly of HP ProCurve, calling them the 'hidden gem of networking.'"

Getting more for less

West Valley-Mission used to have a 1 gigabit backbone with 10 megabytes at each desktop. Wireless connectivity was limited to library areas. And maintenance costs were exorbitant.

Today, West-Valley Mission has an advanced HP ProCurve network that offers a 40 gigabit backbone, 10 gigabits to each building and 1 gigabit at each desktop. The infrastructure features 25 HP ProCurve 8212zl switches at the network core and roughly 81 HP ProCurve 5400zl switches in campus buildings. HP ProCurve Network Access Controller 800s facilitate user authentication, ProCurve Manager Plus (PCM+) delivers advanced network monitoring and HP ProCurve Virus Throttle software boosts network security.

"Our fully redundant 40 gigabit backbone pipe is one of the largest in the country," Smith says. "It will allow us to easily upgrade our email, document management and online learning systems. We'll also have plenty of bandwidth to spare for quality of service, VoIP, video conferencing and other initiatives."

More than a hundred HP ProCurve Radio Port 230s deliver wireless connectivity throughout both campuses. Smith and his team found HP ProCurve wireless access points have a stronger signal than Cisco devices, giving better coverage and minimizing the amount of radio ports that had to be purchased.

"The entire implementation has been seamless," he says. "We've had no hiccups with the switches. HP ProCurve wireless access points are totally plug-and-play; the network automatically discovers and configures them. And the HP equipment worked fine with our pre-existing Cisco gear, enabling a gradual transition."

Customer solution at a glance

Primary applications
- High-speed networking and wireless connectivity

Primary hardware
- HP ProCurve Switch 8212zl
- HP ProCurve Switch 5400zl series
- HP ProCurve Network Access Controller 800
- HP ProCurve Radio Port 230

Primary software
- HP ProCurve Manager Plus (PCM+)
- HP ProCurve Virus Throttle software

The most surprising and satisfying part of West Valley-Mission's network upgrade, Smith adds, has been the immense cost savings. HP ProCurve products came at a lower price than the alternatives and don't require annual maintenance or service contracts. In addition, the district's new network runs on 1500 watt power supplies. The solution proposed by Cisco called for 6000 watt power supplies and would have necessitated major infrastructure upgrades in all of West Valley-Mission's wiring closets.

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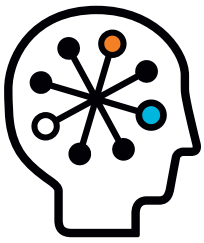

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4AA2-9768ENW October 2009

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