

Novell helps **Motherwell College** further education**A CASE STUDY FOR THE EDUCATION SECTOR FEATURING ZENWORKS™ FOR DESKTOPS, NDS®, GROUPWISE®**

With over 14,000 enrolled students, Motherwell College, situated to the south-east of Glasgow, is one of Scotland's larger colleges of further education offering a range of educational opportunities to full-time, day release and even Saturday morning students. "The network has become vital to our business", explains John Morrison, network system supervisor. "Our staff and students depend on it. It has to be robust, reliable and always available."

One of the major drivers for the development of the Motherwell network was the government initiative for learning. "Like most colleges, we started with a small network - the technology wasn't very stable and it was prone to crashing, therefore wasn't really used properly because it was unreliable", recalls Morrison. "But, we wanted to attract students and give them the skills that they need to be successful in the local job market. Most of those have an element of IT, so it was important to invest in a reliable and robust network infrastructure that we could easily support."

The college has now made a firm commitment to its network, stating in its Development Plan that 100% of the applications used in the college will be delivered through the network by 2002. "The only reason we can set this policy is because of Novell®

ZENworks™ for Desktops and the control it gives us over our systems", says Morrison.

Motherwell's network has to support both staff and student and its administrators have to cope with setting up more than 7,000 students accounts at the start of each academic year. "This isn't like a corporate network, where people come and go throughout the year - we have this huge influx of students who suddenly arrive and expect to have their network account set up and ready", explains Morrison. "It's a nightmare in network administrative terms - can you imagine having to enter and set up 7,000 accounts complete with email addresses? Before Novell Directory Services®, we just couldn't do it."

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To set up new student accounts, Morrison and his team extract the data from the College Management Information System and push it straight into the Directory. "As students are enrolled, their details get captured in the MIS system, so we go to the source for the information", explains Morrison. "We run it almost on a batch file basis, taking information at the end of each day throughout the whole of

the enrolment period. This means that when the student turns up, their personal network account has been set up along with an email account, print rights and Internet access. Depending on the course they have been enrolled onto, only the applications they need to access will appear on their desktop the first time they log in. It may seem like common sense, but it really has been an



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Success Story
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achievement to get it all working, and a big leap forward for us.”

Associating applications with courses and creating roaming desktops for students has only been possible due to Novell Directory Services (NDS®), ZENworks for Desktops and Novell Application Launcher. “Being able to set up the network this way offers so much more flexibility - not just for students but also for the college. Students and staff can now work anywhere they can find a computer connected to the college network - in open access areas or the library, for example. For the college it has meant timetabling classes has been made much easier. In the past, due to constraints on either the network or the equipment, we could only run certain applications in certain labs - which just threw up horrors in timetabling. As the applications are now associated with the student rather than a particular location, we can put any group in any of the computer rooms. It’s so much easier and has cut down significantly on administrative time when creating the timetables.”

Licensing applications has always been a difficult task for large educational establishments, with many erring on the side of caution and overbuying software simply because there was no accurate way of knowing exactly how many were in use at any one time. “Even though we enjoy educational discounts for many software applications, it’s still a big expense keeping them up to date and making sure there are enough licences to go round. However, with Novell Licensing Services, all we have to do now, when we add a piece of software to the directory, is also tell it how many licences we own”, says Morrison. “Then, when the object is launched, the certificate is notified and we can control the usage of the software.”

Depending on the software and the negotiated licensing terms, when a licence limit is reached, users either wait until the software becomes available as another user finishes with it, or they are granted usage of the application and an overdraft flag is notified to the network administrator. “There is a facility in the licence service application to allow an overdraft. This feature is really useful, as it doesn’t disrupt the

student yet lets us know that our licence limit has been reached. Depending on the application we then take a view on whether this is a one-off situation or we buy some more licences.” It has also been an extremely valuable tool for the college in planning what software to buy for the next academic year. “We can now show exactly the usage that has been made of every piece of software, so we know what is being used and what isn’t. Finally we have a tool that can help to justify software purchase - it’s no longer guesswork or intuition and helps to make the most of our budget”, says Morrison.

Email is an important application for the college and Novell’s messaging software, GroupWise®,

was upgraded with GroupWise Enhancement Pack 5.5 last Summer. “We took the deliberate decision not to use an email client but deliver mail through the browser”, says Morrison. “At the moment, students can access their mail from an internal system, but by adopting this method we will be able to make mail

available from home or outside the college in the future.” These are part of the plans for next year. “There is nothing technically stopping us, but as student email is a new facility we want to retain close control of it, at least initially, until we feel confident about the way it’s being used.”

Before implementing the existing system, Morrison and his team did investigate alternative solutions. “Frankly, there weren’t any viable alternatives”, says Morrison. “By using Novell solutions we can support 7,000 users on 14 servers delivering applications to over 800 workstations with a staff of four. And that’s providing service from 8 in the morning until 9 at night.” Recently, however, the team did have to take one of the servers out of use. “It had been up continuously for 102 days and we had to take it out of commission to apply the latest support pack”, says Morrison. “Servers running Novell applications are just incredibly reliable.”



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