

CASE STUDY: NMIT

CONNECTING STAFF AND STUDENTS CAMPUS-WIDE

CASE STUDY SNAPSHOT

Customer

NMIT

Industry

Education

Requirements

To improve communications access across NMIT's campuses, the Institute's mobile platforms needed to be upgraded for staff that typically used standard, talk and text functions on their mobile handsets. With meetings and travel required between campuses, the need for staff to remotely access Institute resources was also a priority.

Solution

Optus Business, along with its wholly owned ICT services provider Alphawest, suggested building a full scale Wi-Fi network for on-campus Internet access. This would provide reliable access to the Internet and the ability to handle large volumes of data traffic. The Wi-Fi network would use the latest in 802.11n technologies from Cisco Systems.

Results

Wireless data access via Wi-Fi at NMIT has extended the potential for teaching and learning across the Institute. The limitations once present in providing access to Internet-ready classrooms and computer labs have been reduced. Teachers and students are also now able to access learning resources on the internet and through the student portal whilst on the move.



OPTUS AND ALPHAWEST OPEN NETWORK BOUNDARIES

OVERVIEW

The Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE (NMIT) is a growing educational institution with over 74,500 enrolments and approximately 1,300 staff. A diverse institute, covering Vocational Education and Training (VET) as well as Higher Education (HE), NMIT is certified to deliver over 500 nationally accredited, plus more than 400 Institute accredited courses. NMIT students benefit from hands-on tuition in industry standard facilities located across six campuses in Melbourne's north, six specialist training centres and a regional campus at Ararat in Victoria's central west. NMIT's classrooms come in many shapes and sizes, including digital design studios, metal working shops, fully operational restaurants, horse stud, wine bottling plant, a 300-hectare farm, television studio, hairdressing salons, IT labs and a meat processing facility to name but a few.

CHALLENGE

With varying technological requirements across metropolitan and regional areas, it was clear the NMIT's network did not have the capacity to support the unique requirements of all students and staff.

Constraints existed on where lessons could take place, since online learning resources and assignments were confined to heavily-booked classrooms or computer labs where wireless access was not available.

In line with improving communications access across campuses, there was a requirement to upgrade NMIT's mobile platforms for staff using standard, talk and text functions on their mobile handsets. With meetings and travel required between campuses, the need for staff to remotely access Institute resources was an important priority.

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Rob Hagan,
CIO, NMIT

SOLUTION

Working closely with the State Government and Skills Victoria, NMIT was introduced to Optus Business and its ICT subsidiary, Alphawest. “We knew of Optus Business’ reputation for its mobile network capabilities. From our first meeting, we could see that Optus Business was keen to understand our strategy and would help provide the right solution for our needs,” said Rob Hagan, CIO, NMIT.

Access to the Internet and NMIT resources had been valued by the Institute’s staff for many years. To continue this, and improve the level of access, Optus Business suggested building a full scale Wi-Fi network for on-campus Internet access. This would provide reliable and secure access to the Internet and the ability to handle a large volume of data traffic. The Wi-Fi network would use the latest in 802.11n technologies, delivered by Alphawest in conjunction with Cisco Systems. The Wi-Fi network was also made more secure on a new security platform provided by Alphawest, utilising the latest Cisco offerings.

In the interim, whilst developing the new network, Optus Business would provide NMIT staff with its USB 3G modems to provide mobile Internet access. The modems would continue to be used for off campus Internet access after the Wi-Fi implementation.

To address the need for a new mobile platform for NMIT executives, a variety of email-enabled handsets were selected. Mailbox connectivity and calendar synchronisation was appealing to staff, as well as the fact that the chosen devices could easily integrate with the NMIT instant messaging platform.

“Optus took the time to really listen to our pain points and worked with us to develop a strategic plan for mobile computing. What made us so comfortable was the fact that the team was flexible in their approach and sensitive to our needs. It also helped that all the solutions would be implemented in a phased manner,” said Mr. Hagan.

OUTCOMES

Wireless data access via Wi-Fi at NMIT has extended the potential for teaching and learning across the Institute. The original limitation of providing access to Internet-ready classrooms and computer labs has been reduced. Teachers and students are now able to access learning resources on the Internet and through the student portal, whilst on the move. This has been particularly productive for classes such as hairdressing or massage, which are traditionally conducted outside the classrooms or labs.

The new Optus wireless network provides staff and students with wireless Internet access from anywhere on any of NMIT’s locations. For teachers, this allows for greater variety and opportunities for learning inside and outside the classroom. Having the same Internet access from each NMIT campus location across Victoria has also been an enhancement. For students, the wide-reach of the new network has provided the opportunity to bring their own laptops or smart phones to any NMIT location and securely connect to the Internet and to online Institute resources. In this way, greater flexibility has been provided to complete assignments from anywhere on NMIT soil.

Based on the implementation of a Wi-Fi network, BlackBerry handsets have provided NMIT executives with the ability to access Institute resources when attending meetings outside their workplaces and have improved productivity and efficiency by allowing staff to respond to emails or to place orders even when travelling.

“The flexibility of being always connected with Optus has given NMIT a key advantage in a very competitive marketplace,” said Mr Hagan.

In line with the implementation, NMIT is developing an e-Learning program using the Optus wireless network to facilitate teaching processes. A group of teachers and students will be surveyed each semester to determine their experience of the network as well as their adoption and the benefits achieved.

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ABOUT ALPHAWEST

Alphawest, a wholly owned subsidiary of Optus, provides integrated Information and Communication Technology (ICT) solutions. Built around a Unified Communications and Collaboration strategy, Alphawest solutions help bring technologies, processes and people together to enable green organizations to simply work and communicate better.

For more information, please visit www.alphawest.com.au.

ABOUT OPTUS BUSINESS

Optus Business is a leading provider of telecommunications and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) solutions to businesses across the spectrum. Optus Business solutions are suitable for organisations with 200 or more employees and include mobile, IP converged solutions, voice and managed services.

CONTACT

If you want to discuss how Optus can help you increase productivity through innovative communications solutions, contact your Optus Account Manager, call our hotline on **1800 555 937** or visit our website at www.optus.com.au/business



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