



The Bishop's Stortford High School

The Bishop's Stortford High School has around 1,100 students and 130 staff. The IT department has 700 terminals on the network, with storage hosted by 20 virtual servers running a mixture of operating systems, including different versions of Linux and Windows. The SAN device used to store the bulk of students' and staff's documents were rapidly running out of space. With additional SAN storage costing in the order of £1,000 per Tb, Network Manager Andy Field was forced to look for alternatives.

Big data

'It's a constantly growing system. Most people don't appreciate the amount of data on school networks,' Andy says. 'Storage growth is our biggest problem.' The main two document stores were run from a single file server, with shared areas for staff and students totalling around 5 Tb. Most students had a fixed allowance of 3 Gb, but there were no limits in place for staff. 'Some need 40 Gb, but that usage is all legitimate, so we can't decrease it!'

As usual, the most common problem files were Office documents that incorporated lots of pictures, and photographs taken straight from students' iPods. 'They copy and paste images directly into Word instead of using best practices. Files of 6 Mb or so are pretty common. Then there are the photo archives. We have around 137,000 photos on just one drive, each of them 2 or 3 Mb. That was something we definitely had to address.'

Searching for a solution

Andy found out about NXPowerLite for File Servers by chance, when he attended the BETT (British Educational Training and Technology) Show. After speaking to a Neuxpower representative, he realised the software was exactly what he needed. He downloaded and ran the Quickscan tool on the network, and was impressed with the result.

'Software wasn't even on my shopping list that day, but it was the best thing I'd found all year. Within a week I had ordered and installed NXPowerLite for File Servers, and I ran it over half term. There was no network downtime at all during the installation. It was all very quick, and well-priced – so there weren't any budgeting issues or sign-off from accounts needed. And it saved me having to upgrade the SAN.'



Results

The school experienced their biggest reclamation of storage after first running NXPowerLite. However, storage space is continually being reclaimed because Andy now sets the software to run automatically, to ensure that the document stores stay as small as possible. 'I run it a few hours overnight and on Sundays. To be honest, I haven't touched it for a while. It's nice to know that when I come in on Monday mornings, everything is optimised.'

Effect of NXPowerLite on shared document storage

Total storage	5000 Gb
Initial storage reduction after running NXPowerLite the first time	410 Gb
Estimated ongoing monthly storage reclaim	100 Gb

The software was particularly effective at reducing the students' Office files, as well as shrinking the bloated photo archives. 'The Office documents that were 6 Mb or so were typically reduced down to 500 Kb'. Andy also notes that the whole process was completely transparent to all users and he has not had one single question or issue from users about their files.

"NXPowerLite is the best software I've ever purchased. For its price point and what it does, it's excellent, and there's no impact on end users – no one noticed anything. It has saved me thousands, and a lot of time."

Andy Field, Network Manager, The Bishop's Stortford High School

Unexpected benefits

There were a number of additional knock-on benefits. One of these was that backup times dropped by an hour or so. This meant that the off-site backup could be carried out overnight, so the process was finished by the time Andy came into school in the mornings.



Perhaps more significantly, there was a surprising impact on the catering service. The catering system uses a cashless biometric system that required access to a database stored on the network. The increased traffic associated with backup meant that the network was slower in the early mornings when they were serving breakfast. Students had to wait 15-20 seconds for their data to be verified, causing a backlog in the server. Because the optimised network backed up faster, the wait dropped to 2-3 seconds for each data verification and the backlog disappeared.

Recommendations

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The school has the same finance director as another local school. Andy was so impressed with NXPowerLite that he shared what he had found out. 'Within two weeks the other school had bought it too!'