

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN RAPIDLY IMPROVES TECHNOLOGY REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME

Acronis



ORGANISATION:

The University of Aberdeen

INDUSTRY:

Education and Research

KEY CHALLENGES:

- Maintain consistent environment on 1700 PCs

SOLUTION:

- 2000 licenses of Acronis® Snap Deploy® for Workstation

BUSINESS BENEFITS:

- Time taken to deploy a single PC halved
- Up to 10 weeks' worth of IT deployment time saved each year

INTRODUCTION

Located in the North East of Scotland, the University of Aberdeen is at the forefront of teaching, learning and discovery, as it has been for 500 years. Known as the 'global university of the north' this research-driven university is committed to excellence in everything it does and currently sits 129th in the Times Higher World University Rankings.

The University of Aberdeen's Service Delivery Division is responsible for the installation and management of over 250 software applications on 1700 publicly accessible PCs, including lecturers' PCs. These are used daily in a teaching environment by staff and students across the University's various campuses.

Over 20% of the software applications on these PCs need to be local — installed on each individual computer, with the remainder being accessed over a network or deployed via Active Directory. These applications need to be updated annually. Derek Findlay, Computing Support Officer for the University, explains: "New service pack upgrades, security updates and newer versions of software are released continually".

If these are not implemented and regularly maintained, the outdated software could potentially pose security risks to the university as well as hinder the teaching progress.

In addition, as part of the annual update programme, new software applications required for teaching are installed as and when requested by the teaching staff.

A MASTERFUL APPROACH

Initially, the classroom deployment team used early imaging products to create a master image that could then be deployed on all PCs. However, these products were using DOS technology which meant the master image could not exceed 4GB in size. With software upgrades leading to an increase in data size, and with new software solutions designed to enhance teaching appearing all the time, the classroom team were finding it harder to stay within the 4GB size restriction. Derek notes: "Software applications going onto the local PCs had to be restricted and prioritised so as not to bloat the image size. We had to develop ways of installing software which wasn't going on the local PCs. Many man hours were spent trying to find software solutions that could work over a network."

It was soon recognised that a new solution was needed. Having looked at various solutions, most were ruled out due to technical issues or because they were prohibitively expensive. After a thorough process, Derek took the decision to trial Acronis Snap Deploy for Workstation. "I did my research and saw some very positive Acronis Snap Deploy product reviews. Not only is it affordable but there is also no limitation on image size. After trialing the software for a month, we were happy with the results and purchased 200 licenses straight away in April last year, and 1800 more in July. We found the software easy to use and the Acronis support team was there to help us utilise and configure the product for the university's specific needs. The Acronis support team was really helpful during the development phase," recalls Derek.

ACRONIS PROVIDES DEPLOYMENT IN RECORD TIME

Acronis Snap Deploy has halved the time taken to image existing PCs, saving the Service Delivery Division up to 10 weeks of IT deployment time each year. "Prior to purchasing Snap Deploy, it would take us up to two hours to image a single PC, not to mention the time taken to create a master image that was under 4GB," notes Derek. "Using Acronis, it now takes us just under one hour to image a PC and we no longer have to worry about the master image size."

The classroom team can now create individual master images containing the operating system, settings and all the applications required, and place it on any of the 1700 PCs that they maintain. The key advantage for Derek is that Acronis Snap Deploy does not place a size restriction on the master image. The classroom team no longer has to spend many man hours searching for network solutions when it comes to software, as all the software can now be placed on the local PCs prior to rollout.

Derek explains: "As part of the technology replacement programme, the university does not keep PCs for more than four years. Every year roughly 25% of the existing PCs get replaced with new ones. We rely on the additional Acronis licenses to help us get these machines up and running as quickly as possible so there is very little downtime."

Derek concludes: "Acronis Snap Deploy is very cost effective and easy to use. The additional functionality it has to offer makes it a clear winner."

ABOUT ACRONIS

Acronis sets the standard for New Generation Data Protection through its backup, disaster recovery, and secure access solutions. Powered by the AnyData Engine and set apart by its image technology, Acronis delivers easy, complete and safe backups of all files, applications and OS across any environment — virtual, physical, cloud and mobile.

Founded in 2002, Acronis protects the data of over 5 million consumers and 300,000 businesses in over 130 countries. With its more than 100 patents, Acronis' products have been named best product of the year by Network Computing, TechTarget and IT Professional and cover a range of features, including migration, cloning and replication.

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