

School District Refreshes Labs 98% Quicker Using SmartDeploy instead of Dell KACE

ohio school district
K-12

OVERVIEW

As a growing school district of over 5,000 students across nine local campuses, the school board places emphasis on academic excellence, enhancing communication, and improving student performance. Keeping up with the evolving information technology needs of this Ohio school district has been a significant undertaking for the Director of IT and his team of three. Managing over 2,200 devices means that efficiency and reliability are top priority. When the team realized that it was taking them four days to deploy a lab of 100 computers using the inherited imaging solution, Dell KACE K2000, they began seeking an alternative solution that would reduce the number of resources required for imaging and lab refreshes.

The team chose SmartDeploy Enterprise for its deployment speed, driver management approach, and world-class support. Since adoption, deployment speed has produced a 98% time savings for computer lab refreshes and ongoing desktop management across the school district.

BUSINESS SITUATION

The IT team maintains three images (Windows XP, Windows 7, Windows 7+ multimedia software) for over 2,200 devices district-wide. Computer labs are refreshed each trimester to return computers to a clean state and prepare for new curriculum. Additionally, the Director of IT and his team schedule PC refresh and Windows migration projects throughout the year. With the KACE

deployment solution, common IT tasks had become unmanageable for the technicians.

The Dell KACE K2000 virtual appliance was inherited from the previous director and concerns about slow deployment speed and inflexibility began to rise. "With the K2000, it took us an entire day to pull down an image which we could only deploy to 40 devices at a time due to an Ethernet interface limitation that only allowed us to connect to one of the two ports," the director explained. "We reached out to Dell for support but their suggestions didn't improve performance in any significant way." The team had to find an alternative to resolve the slow speeds and batch deployment method dictated by limitations of the KACE solution.

Driver management is another task that the team wanted to streamline. They had standardized on Dell hardware in the form of three desktop models and 10 laptop models. "In most cases, Dell has a driver pack we can download and add to the image. But there's also times where drivers are embedded in the applications," the director explained. "It takes anywhere from half a day to two days to get a driver function worked out in the KACE imaging platform." Besides frustration, the time wasted on driver management prevented the team from focusing on other IT initiatives and projects.

Organization Size:

2,200+ computers

Organization Profile:

Public school district of over 5,000 students across nine local campuses

Country/Region:

United States

Industry:

Education, K-12

Business Needs:

Faster, easier computer lab refreshes

Solution:

SmartDeploy Enterprise

"With SmartDeploy, I'm able to image 15 computers in 15 minutes."

Solution

The experience with Dell KACE customer support didn't meet the standards that the school district expected from an industry-leading organization. "Through Dell, you can't really call and ask for help with imaging," explained a senior technician. The KACE solution is very complex and it relies on the user knowing and understanding best practices for image architecture and driver management. Dell does not provide support documentation regarding recommended methods and best practices which can add weeks, sometimes months, to the ramp up time depending on the complexity of the IT environment. Since the KACE appliance can be difficult to setup and use, accessible and knowledgeable support was a requirement for the IT team that was not being fulfilled.

BENEFITS

Speed and Simplicity

The most valuable and immediate benefit that the school district has experienced with SmartDeploy is the increased deployment speed. Time savings is also achieved through built-in best practices, easy image updates, and simplified driver management. "With SmartDeploy, I'm able to image 15 computers in 15 minutes," a senior technician explained. Over the school year, the IT time savings for the school district will equal more than 1,000 hours.

SmartDeploy's hardware-independent single image management approach makes updates a breeze. "Making changes to our images is faster and easier with SmartDeploy," explained a senior technician. With SmartDeploy, users build the reference machine on a virtual machine which allows ultimate flexibility and control. Users simply power up the virtual machine, install updates, and recapture the image quickly on their local machine. And unlike the K2000, which required the team to Sysprep their reference machine for updates, SmartDeploy runs Sysprep at deployment time which keeps the integrity of the reference machine intact. With SmartDeploy, software updates only impact the image and work perfectly on any device. This hardware-independent architecture cut their image library in half which makes it possible to update the entire library on a routine basis.

Downloadable Driver Packages

As an included service for supported users, SmartDeploy provides full access to a library of over 600 model-specific driver packages

called Platform Packs. "The Platform Packs from SmartDeploy are a big benefit. With KACE, we spent a lot of time downloading and extracting all the driver files we needed," a senior technician explained. Platform Packs are built and maintained by SmartDeploy technicians who organize the driver files and eliminate unnecessary data so that each endpoint device gets only the drivers needed for that specific model. This method minimizes PC issues such as blue screens that can cause user downtime and time consuming IT troubleshooting.

SmartDeploy reduced driver management time by up to 93% for the school district compared to the time they spent when using Dell KACE. The reimaged PCs are more reliable and they run into fewer driver-related problems. With KACE, the team spent two days acquiring and setting up the drivers for their existing endpoint devices. "With SmartDeploy, I had all of the drivers working within an hour," the director explained.

Support from Deployment Experts

Reliable support from knowledgeable US-based deployment experts is something that the school district has found invaluable. "With SmartDeploy, I can call and ask imaging and scripting questions and they always have an answer." The SmartDeploy support team consists of 300 level and higher technicians with first-hand imaging and deployment experience. With Essential Support, every technician receives timely responses that allow them to keep moving on existing projects without delay.

"The SmartDeploy documentation is very good and I was able to setup an image right away," a technician stated. The SmartDeploy team is focused on educating the IT community on the latest deployment best practices and recommended methods.

As a company, SmartDeploy is committed to providing an intelligent desktop management solution that simplifies common tasks for IT professionals. Users benefit from a flexible layering architecture, single image management, and downloadable driver packages. With thorough documentation and world-class support from experienced technicians, users are equipped to streamline imaging and deployment initiatives without sacrificing IT resources.

Learn more: www.smartdeploy.com or 888-7DEPLOY

smartdeploy®