

Headline: Camden Council LEA's Studied Move to Kaseya IT Managed Services Technology

Overview

Comprising 11 square miles in the heart of London, Camden is a borough of immense contrast and diversity. Like many inner city councils, Camden has a huge range of infrastructure in terms of its buildings, people and facilities that it has to maintain and look after.

This is especially true of its education establishments. There are a wide range of education institutions in Camden – ranging from primary, secondary, special schools, higher and further education establishments.

The Need

Overlooking Local Education Authority (LEA) IT support services for Camden Council is a complex task. Seven full-time engineers have to look after 48 different education establishments across the London borough. The LEA IT services department works in a competitive market, the schools reappoint it annually based on its performance over the previous 12 months. With the schools operating in a free market economy, efficient and effective support is paramount.

In late 2003, Camden, like numerous other organisations and businesses, was hit by the Sasser virus. This resulted in the IT networks being taken off line for 4 and a half days as the department and its engineers had to run from school to school and machine to machine trying to firefight the problem.

Clearly, a different approach was required to remotely manage the IT infrastructure for 48 education establishments should another serious security breach happen again.

The Answer

Colin Strain, Camden Council LEA Services Manager, went to the Help Desk Show in Olympia in April 2004 to find a specific solution for handling remote patch management to counter the threat of Sasser and other viruses.

Whilst at the Show, Colin Strain started talking to Kaseya about its patch management technology. He soon realised that Kaseya's Enterprise IT managed services technology had a far wider ability than just fighting viruses.

Comments Colin Strain: "Kaseya's technology offered a number of features that we found attractive. Patch management was our top priority, but the ability to take over a person's machine with remote control was a close second."

The Solution

Camden started to road test Kaseya's inventory, patch management and remote control solution over three or four months. The IT engineers at the council found that the technology added a wide range of functionality that helped to make their working lives a lot easier and more productive.

Kaseya's technology offers a number of advantages over rival remote management solutions. Unlike rival technologies, organisations using Kaseya don't have to set-up expensive Virtual Private Networks (VPN) to remotely control machines over the network. Kaseya's solution is also not Active Directory or domain dependant allowing freedom from the constraints these can impose.

"Every five minutes or so, I would hear 'wow' that's cool as the engineers found another feature that they liked. The remote control aspects of Kaseya have made a real difference to way in which the engineers work, day-to-day," states Colin Strain.

The Benefits

Camden LEA IT department can now provide real-time remote support to its customers. This means that they can rectify problems without having to go to each school. "We used to spend half our time waiting for buses to travel to schools. Now, we can solve IT problems from the comfort of our seat and desk," adds Strain.

The department now responds to emergencies in a much more controlled, time-effective manner. Whereas the Sasser incident took nearly a week to control and a month to recover from, Camden's IT engineers can now resolve issues in a matter of hours.

"One of the schools had a corrupted Active Directory, we managed to get it up and running whilst juggling other work loads. Key to this capability is the fact that our engineers can still go on site visits, yet log on remotely to solve problems on other sites. We saved a week's worth of time by remotely fixing it."

The IT team can now handle their workload in a more strategic manner. Before, if there was a critical issue, everything else was put on hold. Now, engineers can multi-task. "Kaseya has been invaluable for compliance issues. For instance, if a password was compromised, it was a massive logistical exercise as all PCs had to be changed individually. Now, it can be done remotely at once, saving a lot of time and effort. It also improves security."

Prior to the introduction of Kaseya's technology, the IT team had to close down the IT network and outside access to the Internet which goes through a centralised service provider. This was frustrating for the schools as they were effectively closed-off from the Web and remote teaching whilst virus threats were being dealt with.

"With Kaseya, we can keep the school network on-line and yet still respond to virus threats, which is a major benefit," states Strain.

The schools will soon start to notice the improved service support. There was a concern that some schools might be sceptical because of being 'out of sight was out of mind'. One or two schools were concerned about the LEA over-controlling IT. However, these fears will soon be allayed after the IT team quickly resolve issues remotely, with minimal delay.

The IT support team will benefit as they can now provide a far more structured, detailed reporting which, in turn, sells their services to the schools. "Each year, we have to go to the schools and show what we've done for them. We can now provide far more in-depth report to demonstrate the issues we've resolved and the upgrade path we've provided. It makes our service provision more transparent and easier to justify."

The Future

Camden Council's IT Services team now has a stronger relationship with its education customers. Thanks to Kaseya technology, IT engineers can respond in a more efficient, strategic and controlled manner. Viruses and other IT threats can be dealt without resorting to crisis management. The schools get a greater understanding of the service they are being provided with. In turn, Camden's LEA IT Services can demonstrate the value it adds to its education clientele far more effectively.