PrinterLogic

Case Study: Lamar Consolidated Independent School District (CISD)

Major School District Implements PrinterLogic in Two Days; Reduces Printer-Related Help Desk Tickets from 2,500 per Year to Four Per Year

LAMARCISD

Challenges

- *The district lacked centralized visibility into a distributed print environment spanning 45 locations over nearly 400 square miles*
- *An outdated print management paradigm forced IT staff to manage a heterogeneous fleet of 1,200 printers and their drivers as individual devices*
- *Annual print-related service desk tickets numbered in the thousands, sapping productivity and driving up support costs*

Results

- *The ability to administer an entire organization from a single pane of glass has provided a clear window into printer health, usage and more*
- *PrinterLogic's centralized driver repository and printer profiling along with reliable automated deployments has provided unprecedented ease of management*
- *Total cost of ownership has plummeted—due largely to the fact that the number of annual print-related support tickets dropped to single digits*

Lamar Consolidated Independent School District (CISD) is an award-winning public school district in the Greater Houston area of southeast Texas. It currently serves more than 37,000 staff and students across 48 locations in an area that covers 43% of Fort Bend County—385 square miles, to be exact, making it highly geographically distributed compared to other school districts.

The district is not only remarkable because of its size. As the fastest-growing school district in the county and the second-fastest-growing school district in the state, its recent history has been characterized by massive and rapid expansion. In the past ten years, it has opened 12 facilities—three in 2016 alone. Four more school campuses are under construction or in the planning phase with another six to eight proposed over the next 4 years. About 1,200 additional students enter Lamar CISD each year.

From an enterprise printing perspective, the speed and scope of the district's expansion pose serious challenges. The district currently operates 22,000 workstations and 14,000 iPads serviced by a fleet of 1,200 printers. These printers are predominantly Ricoh with scattered HP and Dell models and a full Canon photocopier fleet. This large and heterogeneous print environment must be able to adapt instantly to every new facility—along with the usual dynamic changes that are part of any educational setting. Keeping pace was difficult with Lamar CISD's previous print solution, which was initially a combination of Novell Micro Focus iPrint and eDirectory.

"It simply didn't work," says Chris Nilsson, Director of Technology Integration at CISD. "Four years ago, we finally got our Active Directory infrastructure fully up and running and we were able to drop eDirectory. We decided to keep iPrint because at the time we believed our options were that or Windows Print Servers. Neither one seemed great, but the devil we knew was Novell. What we lost was automatic printer installation! So we attempted to use our desktop management tools to build rules for installing printers. And it was just the worst year ever. No year prior to that had been good, but that year was awful."

In 2014, after a particularly high printer issue day, Nilsson received an e-mail from PrinterLogic. Following two days of research and a multi-day onsite trial, he locked in a perpetual license for the entire district—a total of two days after signing the purchase order, PrinterLogic's solution immediately replaced one redundant and four primary print servers.

"PrinterLogic literally had everything we wanted; no print servers, a centralized driver source, profiling, ease of automated deployment, reporting and monitoring, and deployment options with visual maps. It was like I had sat down with PrinterLogic's engineers and said, 'This is what we want.'"

Full deployment of PrinterLogic took just two business days—with one day of that devoted to an arcane iPrint export process that only ran on Windows XP.

Challenge #1—Increased Visibility into the Print Environment

To make informed decisions in his leading IT role, Nilsson has to be data-driven. Based on the high costs of print management and the type of support tickets that were flooding the service desk, he knew operational efficiencies were waiting to be discovered throughout the print environment. The challenge lay in identifying them before they became problematic.

"We just reached the point where, when I looked at the data, we were sending people to go out and fix things that never should have been a problem or should have been able to be fixed remotely or automatically," he says. "It was like we were stuck in 1996."

"In the 17 years I've been doing this, PrinterLogic is the only product that has done more than what its salespeople promised at exactly the cost that was promised, and it beat the implementation timeframe. Even now, after two-and-a-half years, we've continued to have no issues."

Solution

With PrinterLogic's solution in place, Nilsson and his IT team now have the enterprise-wide "visibility and transparency" they need to monitor print activity, view detailed information on deployments and respond to new situations before issues arise.

"I know exactly what is deployed in my infrastructure," he says. "I know exactly which printers are healthy or not healthy. I know what's happening on those printers. I know exactly what it's costing me. That visibility is great."

Challenge #2—Unparalleled Ease of Management

As the growth of Lamar CISD's print environment tried to keep pace with the growth of the district itself, the print management paradigm used in Novell iPrint became untenable.

"In iPrint, every object—so every printer—had a unique driver assigned," Nilsson explains. "Nothing was shared. So when you wanted to make a change in the fleet, you had to make it individually everywhere. There was no simple automated routine. The concept of profiling a printer driver and scoping that to specific locations just didn't exist. As long as we were a Novell eDirectory district where Novell was our backbone, then we could at least install printers based on some rules. But they were very difficult to manage, and it didn't work."

Solution

To illustrate the ease of PrinterLogic's software, Nilsson cites one recent example that would have been utterly impossible with their previous solution: a down-to-the-wire school opening.

"We literally could not move computers or printers in until two days before the building opened," he says, as it was still awaiting final inspection. "The fiber for the network was not installed until the morning the students were there. As soon as the fiber was hooked up to the building, people had their printers. The [PrinterLogic] agent just went, 'Oh, I'm supposed to have these two printers.' And it was ready to go. No hiccups at all."

It's that kind of "ease of fleet management" that Nilsson describes as "brilliant."

"The idea that we have a lot of different models of printers, but we have only eight or nine drivers that cover everything. The ability to simply and easily update any driver and have that change affect 1,200 printers that are installed on 22,000 computers. And to know that it's completely reliable, that it just works. That's just huge."

Challenge #3—Reduced Total Cost of Ownership (TCO)

In the minds of admins and end users alike, there was little doubt that the previous print environment was rife with problems. There was no better proof of this than the volume of print-related support tickets.

"We were running extremely high ticket counts, and there were extremely long wait times for users. If they put in a work order, they didn't know if it was going to be that day or a year and a half. We were averaging about 97 days to solve an issue. It was just horrible. Basically, every teacher thought the technology staff had no idea what we were doing because we couldn't even get the simple stuff right and we couldn't respond to their issues in time."

Ironically, the sheer volume of support tickets became a problem in and of itself. The protracted wait times severely limited users' productivity until the root cause could be resolved. And the support team was so preoccupied with basic print management—"requests to have printers installed, removed, drivers changed, print queues"—that it was unable to deal promptly with other issues, thus driving up the cost of support.

Solution

"Now," says Nilsson, "we average just over a one-day turnaround. Most of our tickets are solved in 8.7 hours. And if it's escalated, we average under two hours. So we've been able to deliver an actual service-level agreement that's predictable. People love it."

That precipitous drop in support tickets was made possible through PrinterLogic's powerful centralized printer and driver management, precise automated deployment without group policy objects (GPOs) or scripts, self-service installation and the elimination of single points of failure.

"We have almost zero print-related help desk tickets. We went from about 2,500 printer-related tickets in a year down to three or four. Soft costs in particular went down massively."

Conclusion and Savings Summary

By migrating to PrinterLogic, Lamar CISD has been able to eliminate five print servers—along with their costs of upgrade, maintenance and operation—while achieving an extraordinary reduction in the time and resources the support team was spending on print-related tickets.

By rolling the annual iPrint maintenance fees into a three-year purchase plan, Lamar CISD has seen a decrease in its annual print server/system costs per year. After year three, that savings will increase to approximately $20,000 per year.

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