Plymouth University supports the next generation of coding experts with Wi-Fi solution from Computacenter

PLYMOUTH UNIVERSITY

Services

- Configuration and Logistics
- Product Fulfilment
- Network Maintenance
- Workplace Strategy

Technology

- Cisco access points, switch and wireless controller

Customer Agenda

- Risk Avoidance
- Continuous Improvement/ Innovation
- Access to Skilled Resources

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Customer challenge

When i-DAT (the Institute of Digital Art and Technology) and Plymouth University played host to the Festival of Code, it needed to scale up its Wi-Fi capabilities to cope with an influx of 1,000 young people operating multiple devices in a few, very concentrated locations. As the high-profile event has a strong up-to-the-minute presence on social media, the university's reputation and the success of the event were at stake.

Computacenter solution

Using the university's existing infrastructure, Computacenter installed 58 additional access points across 3 buildings on the main campus and at the Plymouth Pavilions arena. Computacenter managed the project and worked in partnership with University technical staff throughout, from planning and design to installation and configuration, and providing on-site technical support during the event.

Results

As first time hosts for the event, Plymouth University working with Computacenter ensured that the Wi-Fi service met the demands of this challenging event with no outages or service degradation and provided an excellent user experience. The success of the event earned the university praise on social media and enabled it to contribute to the development of 'tomorrow's' programmers.

Computacenter
Enabling Users

> "The success of the event means we have played a part in empowering brilliant young minds."
>
> **Birgitte Aga,
> Creative Director for i-DAT,
> Plymouth University**

Customer profile:

An award-winning UK university

Home to approximately 28,000 students, Plymouth University is one of the largest in the UK, and has invested more than £150 million into its estate and facilities to enhance the student experience and support research.

With a strong record in research, teaching, enterprise and innovation, the university was awarded a Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education in 2012, the second time that honour had been bestowed upon it since it became a university in 1992. It is also the greenest university according to the People and Planet Green League.

i-DAT (the Institute of Digital Art and Technology), located within the university's Faculty of Arts and Humanities, is an open research lab for experimentation with creative technology. It worked in partnership with Young Rewired State to host the Festival of Code, a competition, festival and networking event for children aged 18 and under with a passion for coding.

Business challenge:

Scaling up Wi-Fi to cope with festival demand

When the Festival of Code came to Plymouth University in July 2014, its reputation for suffering from inadequate Wi-Fi preceded it.

Nick Sharratt, an Internal Account Manager in Plymouth University's IT team, comments: "The young people who participate in the festival are very heavy social media users, so it's important that the exposure we get is positive or the university's reputation could be impacted."

With around 1,000 users expected to attend the event, the university wanted to ensure that competitors had uninterrupted access to the internet to enable them to carry out their coding activities.

As Birgitte Aga, Creative Director for i-DAT at Plymouth University, explains, "The event took place across four buildings and nine conference rooms, each experiencing high density demands for Wi-Fi from 1,000 users who may have four or five devices each. This was quite challenging in itself; there was the added pressure of knowing that because many projects rely on information from the Internet, if there was an outage during the finals, the competition would be ruined."

With tight timescales and a small budget, the university needed a Wi-Fi solution that could integrate with its existing infrastructure and supply consistent connectivity across the main campus locations and Plymouth Pavilions Arena.

The university decided to address these challenges on the timescale and budget available by engaging with an external partner to deliver the necessary robust, high density and resilient wireless service.

"Computacenter's 'can do' attitude was imperative to the success of the project."

**Nick Sharratt,
Internal Account Manager for IT
Team, Plymouth University**

Computacenter solution:

Consistent and comprehensive connectivity

After a meeting with Computacenter and learning about its networking credentials, the university was confident it had found the right IT partner.

As James Long, Technical Architect in Plymouth University's core IT team, explains: "We were impressed by Computacenter's unique understanding of the project and the importance of delivering an excellent user experience."

Both Plymouth University and Computacenter had existing relationships with Cisco, and decided its Cisco 3700 Access Points and 5508 wireless controller would be right for this project.

Computacenter carried out an assessment of the festival's various locations to ascertain the right number of access points: 46 across the main campus and 12 in the Pavilion. It also developed a schedule to ensure a rapid and cost-effective installation.

The project was completed in just two weeks, from planning and installation to on-site configuration. The service needed at Plymouth Pavilions presented its own unique challenge with only 100Mbps available from the connection to the Pavilions, Computacenter divided the bandwidth to ensure an uninterrupted services during the final arena event, including live video streaming of the event.

"Installing the access points at The Pavilions was not part of the original remit, but it's an excellent example of how Computacenter went above and beyond for us. Its 'can do' attitude was imperative to the success of the project," Nick recalls.

During the three-day event, a Computacenter technical resource team was on standby on-site to help resolve any problems. James comments, "We couldn't afford to have any downtime, but due to the excellent equipment and planning in advance, there were no outages in the end. The festival organisers even Tweeted about how happy they were with the Wi-Fi!"

Results:

Empowering the next generation of programmers

The event was a resounding success: for the first time in the festival's six-year history, the Wi-Fi service was more than able to provide for the demanding requirements of this event.

"Working with Computacenter was a great experience," comments James. "Our reputation could have been at risk with this project; we have built a lot of trust in each other."

The optimised wireless networking solution enabled the university to:

Reduce risk: As well as ensuring a seamless implementation, Computacenter mitigated the risk of any outages during the festival, which could have damaged the university's reputation and future opportunities to host other events.

Enhance the user experience: With access to reliable connectivity, the young programmers were able to focus on the competition and network with other attendees.

"The success of the event means we have played a part in empowering brilliant young minds to develop their skills," concludes Birgitte.

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