

## Case Study

Hopwood Hall College  
Education  
IT Services

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# Further education college transforms learning environment and saves £500k over three years



Competition among UK further education institutes has never been harder and providing modern, technology-focused facilities is one of main ways to attract prospective students. But with an antiquated IT environment, Hopwood Hall College near Manchester

needed to act fast. In partnership with Ricoh IT Services, the College has deployed a virtualised IT infrastructure which has transformed the way students and staff access learning resources and services and has saved the College almost £500k over three years.

## Executive summary

**Name:** Hopwood Hall College  
**Location:** Rochdale and Middleton, nr Manchester  
**Size:** 4,000 students, 650 staff  
**Activity:** Further education

### Challenges

- Competition among further education institutes to offer prospective student first-class learning facilities
- Strategic drive to transform College services
- Antiquated IT systems with some PCs ten years old

### Solution

- Ricoh IT Services
- Design and deployment of a virtual desktop environment
- Ricoh Managed Print Service

### Benefits

- Transforms College services by creating a modern, technology-based learning environment
- Enables a shift from traditional classroom teaching to more independent learning
- Achieves a return on investment in just two months
- Improves the College's competitive advantage with highly marketable, leading-edge facilities and services
- Cuts carbon emissions by 190 tons over three years

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### Challenges

Hopwood Hall College, located on two campus sites just north of Manchester, caters for students from 14 to university level as well as adults, and offers a broad range of academic and vocational courses. Like many further education institutions, the College has to fight hard to attract students who, increasingly, expect high-class services and facilities at the education institutes they select. Hopwood Hall College sees its facilities, particularly IT, as one of the main features that sets Hopwood Hall College apart from its competitors.

But just a few years previously, the College's IT infrastructure was very antiquated; fit for a school environment rather than the more demanding and flexible one needed for further education. Many of the PCs, for example, were almost ten years old and trying to run the latest computer applications on them was almost impossible. Sometimes it was taking over 30 minutes for students to log on to applications and IT services related to their course work.

Simon Evans, Director of Technology and Innovation at Hopwood Hall College, was brought in to make a radical overhaul of the whole IT infrastructure. Evans drew up a three-five year strategy which has as its core aim facilitating a highly advanced learning environment. This would be achieved by providing fast and simple access to all the information, applications and communication services that students needed to support their studies. Critical to the goal of anywhere, anytime online access was a virtualised desktop IT environment.

Evans began with a pilot project comprising 200 thin client PCs in the College's two refurbished learning resource centres. But the College needed support and expertise to expand the pilot out to the 1000 PCs that the College eventually deployed. It so happened that around the same time, the College's hardware account manager changed jobs. He joined Ricoh IT Services (RicoH ITS) and introduced Ricoh to Evans.

Evans says, "I'd not really come across Ricoh ITS before, but pretty much from the first engagement I've been so impressed

with the organisation. Initially, we discussed our vision and needs and what Ricoh came back with was a fantastic project plan. And the team Ricoh put forward has some of the best virtualisation experts I have ever come across. I was also very impressed with the Ricoh team's dedication to making sure we got the best level of service. Even when they didn't know something they had a solution within minutes from the wider Ricoh ITS organisation."

### Solution

Hopwood Hall College used Ricoh ITS to help plan and deploy its entire IT virtualisation environment. It involved rolling out additional PCs to all departments across the College's two campus sites and implementing a thin-client virtualisation solution across the entire infrastructure. In addition to the PCs, the College also set up a new data centre with 16 blade servers and another 5 blade servers dedicated to a storage area network. Evans was so impressed with the quality of service Ricoh provided for the PC environment, that he asked Ricoh to help overhaul server virtualisation.

Evans says, "When the project went live we had virtually no problems which is almost unheard of for a project like this. Then, to put the icing on the cake, I asked Ricoh for the project documentation and I don't think I've ever seen a better document. I actually took the time to write to Ricoh to say it was one of the best technical documents I have ever read. It gave chapter and verse in a way that you could actually use it as a support document going forward. For example, it explained if needed, how to rebuild the solution from scratch."

In addition to the Ricoh ITS solution, the College has also deployed a Ricoh Managed Print Service (MPS). It has replaced a fleet of printers scattered around the College and handled independently by each department making it difficult to manage or control effectively. The Ricoh MPS comprises 30 Ricoh Multifunction Products and an Equitrac print management application. It enables the College to monitor print use very accurately because students access printers using their security passes. The Ricoh MPS has helped the College realise a dramatic reduction in paper use and energy consumption.

### Benefits

The result of the virtualised IT environment that Ricoh helped deploy has been to transform the way students and staff at Hopwood Hall College are able to access learning resources. In particular it is helping the College change its approach to teaching and learning.

"The College has made a massive investment in IT over the last three years, totally renewing its IT infrastructure by spending over £1 million on new student PCs, servers and switches. Our investment in the virtual desktop environment has been

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absolutely crucial to us and the partnership with Ricoh has been very important in making that a success. Students really appreciate the new investment because it gives them access to all of their files and applications 24/7, 365 days a year from wherever they can access broadband," says John Spindler, Deputy Principal at Hopwood Hall College. "It's changing, quite considerably, how students go about their learning. The college recognises this and we're shifting away from tradition pedagogy in classrooms delivering traditional classes with a teacher at the front and students taking part in activities. We're gradually shifting those activities into IT rooms and learning resource centres where there's a much greater focus on independent learning. Over the next five years the college will be changing its direction, so that an increasing amount of our learning programs and time on learning programs will be spent within our learning resource centres."

"At the start of our IT transformation journey, the Principal's overall vision for Hopwood Hall College was to become a 21st Century college and that was going to be achieved through technology access. Now with Ricoh's help we're in a position where one of the selling point we can use in our annual report and prospectus is the provision of a first-class IT infrastructure," says Evans. "And the benefit for students is huge. We have many students who need expensive, business-class software applications for their courses. Not only do they avoid the cost having to buy the software themselves, the Ricoh virtualisation solution also means they can access it at anytime and from anywhere whether they use one of the College PCs, their own PC or laptop, a tablet or even a smart phone."

The College has analysed cost savings by rationalising IT resources and using them more efficiently, and it estimates that the Ricoh virtualisation solution will help save almost £500,000 over three years, achieving a remarkable return on investment in just two months. The environmental benefits have also been impressive. More efficient utilisation of equipment, consolidation of servers and a cut in associated power and cooling energy demand has resulted in a reduction of 190 tons of carbon emissions in three years.

In addition, the new infrastructure has enabled the College to provide students and teachers with the very latest technology such as Window 7 and Microsoft Office 2010. The improved IT environment supports the College's new

virtual learning environment which enables students to access information in a more dynamic way and collaborate with peers and staff more interactively.

According to Evans, although many other suppliers could have helped the College implement its new IT environment, it has been the quality of service, ease of deployment and subsequent reliability and uptime delivered by Ricoh that has made the solution transformational.

Evans says, "The Ricoh virtualisation solution is mission critical to Hopwood Hall College. Without the work that the Ricoh team did, working day and night on the project and building such a resilient infrastructure we would not be where we are today. The confidence factor for me is I can walk pass a classroom and see students using our technology, and knowing that every single one of those devices is working efficiently puts a smile on my face."

Another benefit of the Ricoh solution has been to significantly improve IT resource availability without significant extra investment. Previously, PCs in specific departments - such as art and design or business - were only used by students on those courses and were therefore underutilised. Creating a virtualised desktop environment means any PC can be used to access more or less any subject resource so that when students in the art department, for example, are not using their PCs they can be used by other students.

With regard to the working relationship with Ricoh, Evans says, "I think as an IT service provider Ricoh is outstanding. I've been in education now for several years and I wish I'd known about Ricoh ages ago. Solution providers that I've used in the past have either been education and commercially focused. But the commercial sectors often sees education as the poor relative, so I don't think we always got the same level of service, while education-based providers are often small and under resourced. In Ricoh, the College has a strategic partner that it can trust 100 percent and one that is delivering a first-class service."

### Ricoh Solution/Products

- Virtualised PC and server design & deployment
- Multifunction Products
- Equitrac

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John Spindler, Deputy Principal, Hopwood Hall College



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