

University IT team saves one full-time headcount

Westphal College of Media Arts and Design at Drexel University completely eliminates IT overtime costs and saves one full-time salary annually with KACE®



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*Jason Rappaport, Director of IT
Antoinette Westphal College of Media Arts and Design, Drexel University*

CUSTOMER PROFILE



Company	Westphal College of Media Arts and Design, Drexel University
Industry	Higher education
Country	United States
Employees	200 employees; 2,000 students
Website	www.drexel.edu/westphal/

BUSINESS NEED

Westphal IT chose KACE® to assist with a mandatory security initiative and address IT pain points of patching and application distribution to 800 desktops that regularly resulted in huge overtime costs.

SOLUTION

With KACE, Westphal College has brought all desktops into security compliance, completely eliminated IT overtime expenses and saved the cost of an additional IT professional every year.

BENEFITS

- Reduced overtime for quarterly digital asset updates from 100 hours to zero and finished a day and a half ahead of schedule
- Saved one full-time IT headcount annually
- Implemented reporting on 800 desktops to assist in compliance with security initiative
- Shortened user downtime for fixes from days to hours
- Created central view of entire PC/Macintosh environment

SOLUTIONS AT A GLANCE

- Endpoint Systems Management

The Westphal College of Media Arts and Design at Drexel University prepares students for careers in media, design, and performing and visual arts. Westphal's 2,000 enrollees and 200 faculty and staff members are spread across eight buildings on Drexel's Philadelphia campus, where an IT team of five manages 800 PC, Macintosh and Linux desktops. A university-wide security initiative prompted the team to turn to KACE® to assist with automating encryption on all faculty and staff computers.

DEPLOYING MANUALLY RESULTS IN INCONSISTENCY

Westphal's IT team consists of a director and four technicians, each of whom performed manual upgrades on the college's 800 desktops. With students using the computers almost continuously, the team had to confine deployment of upgrades to the one-week break between academic quarters. That meant scrambling from machine to machine, sometimes remotely, to install updates to the operating system, browser, plug-ins and software applications.

No matter how quickly they worked, though, the team members realized that they were unable to deliver on the promise of consistent systems management across the IT environment. They had no way of ensuring, for example, that all machines were running exactly the same version of the design, animation, modeling and creativity applications on which students and faculty depended. Nor could the team easily determine which computers were inconsistent with the others.

"We were trying to deliver updates and patches to 800 machines in a single week," says Jason Rappaport, IT director of Westphal College, "and we were failing in both timing and consistency."

SPRAY-AND-PRAY APPROACH TO INSTALLERS

The team's approach to remote systems management was to obtain or build installers containing the updates, and then use a variety of tools like PsExec, Active Directory and Apple Remote Desktop to deploy them across the network. But Rappaport came to refer to this approach as "spray and pray" because it was impossible to pull together any kind of reporting on the result that would demonstrate whether the updates had been successful and on which machines.

"We would push our installers," he explains, "then we'd get a phone call from the university's core infrastructure group, telling us we had filled up the Active Directory server with installers again and they were taking up too much disk space. They'd tell us to delete some of the installers to free up space, which meant we had to wait to perform those updates until others were finished. That made for even more inconsistency across our environment."

"It knocked our socks off that we could load a patch or managed installation into the [KACE SMA] once, then reuse that work many times at almost no cost."

*Jason Rappaport
Director of IT*

PRODUCTS & SERVICES

SOFTWARE

KACE Systems
Management Appliance.

OVERTIME, DOWNTIME AND TOO MUCH PIZZA

The biggest casualty of this manual approach to systems management was the team's overtime budget. Five people had one week to upgrade 800 desktops, so late nights and weekends at the office became a way of life, and overtime payroll would regularly swell to 100 hours during the week between quarters.

"We ate a lot more pizza during those one-week crunches than we wanted to eat," recalls Rappaport. "Yet even though our overtime costs were through the roof, we still couldn't serve the faculty and staff that kept working during break, and that became a big source of frustration for everybody. Our office would almost shut down because we were all so focused on deploying upgrades and patches that we didn't have time to support our users' other needs."

MUCH MORE THAN AUTOMATED PATCHING AND APPLICATION DEPLOYMENT

Rappaport's team looked for a way to replace its manual processes through automated patching and application deployment. They described their needs to their reseller who immediately recommended the KACE appliance, which delivers comprehensive systems management. The team also gave other tools a glance, but after a brief trial, they purchased the KACE Systems Management Appliance (KACE SMA).

Right away, they saw that the KACE appliance addressed their biggest pain point with the software distribution, managed installations and patch management needed to keep the college's desktops up to date. "It knocked our socks off that we could load a patch or managed installation into the [KACE SMA] once, then reuse that work many times at almost no cost," Rappaport says.

After several months of success managing installations and scripting remotely, they took a broader view and began consolidating their information systems. They replaced Request Tracker, their

open source tool, with the service desk functionality in KACE, which allowed them to create triggers, custom ticket roles and direct connections into inventory that showed all requests associated with each machine — flexibility they never had before.

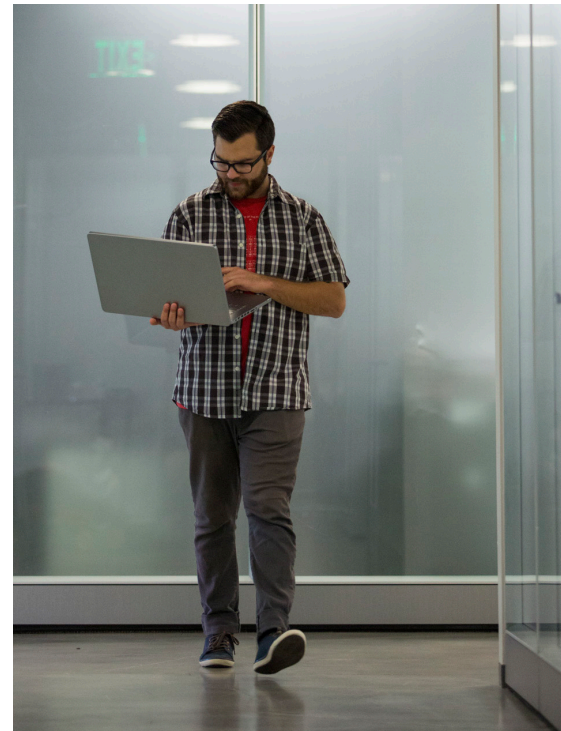
Next, they built custom assets and email alerts in KACE to help them track loaned equipment. When a user borrows a computer, for example, the system is configured to send them a message with terms and conditions, then send a reminder the day before the computer is due back.

Rappaport customized Westphal's KACE implementation using the Twitter Bootstrap framework, MySQL database connections and open source charting tools. He created a real-time window into the service desk that offers his team visually appealing reports on current ticket status and the level of service IT is providing. "We believe in the KACE appliance enough to invest the time and energy to develop this add-on," he says. "Once we'd used it for a while ourselves, we shared it with the community through ITNinja." ITNinja.com is the leading destination for systems management professionals. With the ITNinja feed to the KACE SMA, the latest and most relevant information on systems management and application deployment is conveniently delivered via the familiar and easy-to-use KACE SMA interface.

COMPLIANCE, REPORTING, SHORTER TURNAROUND AND NO MORE OVERTIME

It soon became clear to the team that the KACE Systems Management Appliance was paying for itself.

"We've eliminated — not reduced, but eliminated — overtime spend during break week," says Rappaport. "We went from 100 extra hours to finishing a day and a half early with the KACE appliance." That leaves the team plenty of time to look after the needs of faculty and staff members working through the break. Rappaport estimates that overall cost savings to his department are equivalent to the salary of a full-time IT professional.



His department also benefits from compliance with the university's security initiative. The KACE appliance provides the reporting tools needed to show that the encryption agent is present on all of Westphal's computers and to assist in documenting that the IT group is in full compliance.

Students, faculty and staff benefit from shorter turnaround on break fixes. Users in Westphal had come to expect that they would have to wait for a fix until IT could get around to physically accessing the computer, which might be after hours or on the weekend. With the KACE appliance, once IT has identified the problem and verified the fix, they can deploy it centrally in hours instead of days and make the computer available to users much more quickly than before.

Finally, from Rappaport's perspective as IT director, the strategic benefit of the KACE appliance is that it affords him a comprehensive overview of all 800 desktops in the college. He's pleased that the KACE SMA was flexible enough to allow him to build the Twitter Bootstrap add-on so that he and his team have centralized, dashboard-level insight into their entire inventory that conforms to the way they do business.

"With the KACE appliance, I can easily see where our equipment is, who is using it and what they're doing with it," says Rappaport. "When I need a quick inventory of computers or an overview of application status, I can get it myself in a few seconds instead of calling out to the team to pull the information together for me. Internally I refer to the KACE appliance as the terminator of information systems. You build your installer, you specify the target machines and the terminator makes it happen."

ABOUT QUEST

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