Lincoln Public Schools Save 200 IT Hours Per Year with Automated IT Asset Management

The second largest school district in the state of Nebraska, Lincoln Public Schools educates more than 35,000 students across 61 schools. Their mission centers around student learning, based on a curriculum that provides essential knowledge and skills to succeed in school, higher education, and the world of work. To aid in this goal, LPS provides over 17,000 Macs® and PCs to students, teachers and staff.

The Need for Precision in IT Asset Management

The IT department at LPS needed a way to manage their IT assets with greater precision. With over 17,000 computers and tight resources, it was essential to reconcile the district's hardware and software inventory, streamline allocation and procurement, increase IT's support agility and better educate strategic decision making.

As a recipient of state E-Rate[1] funds, LPS also needed to fulfill increasingly granular reporting requirements. The State Department of Education requires E-Rate beneficiaries to submit an accurate account of inventory and an up-to-date technology plan each year. Previously, the district was asked only to provide counts of overall inventory – an already time-intensive task that required teachers and staff to visit various departments and manually record asset information.

Under new guidelines, LPS is now required to provide more detailed asset information, including the number of computers by platform, how many of each was used by staff versus students, and how many were greater or less than three years old. Pre-existing, manual data collection methods would be unable to accurately nor efficiently collect such information, so LPS set out to find an IT asset management system that would provide robust data collection and reporting capabilities, while streamlining IT processes.

Specifications for an IT Asset Management Tool

Kirk Langer, LPS's Director of Technology, explains the characteristics he looked for when selecting an IT asset management system. "For starters, the system needed to be light touch. We want our technicians to worry about managing the IT assets – not managing the IT asset management system." Second, the system needed to be truly cross-platform with comprehensive features for both Mac® and PC; "We didn't just want a system that accommodated one or the other, we wanted full feature parity," Langer says. Finally, to avoid excess costs, the system needed to take advantage of the district's existing network infrastructure.

Absolute® Manage Fits the Bill

Absolute Manage, an automated computer lifecycle management solution by Absolute Software, fulfilled LPS's IT management requirements. Only four technicians are needed to manage 17,000+ licenses of the software, which allows computers to be managed from either a Mac or PC environment and provides unmatched cross-platform feature parity. With neither a dedicated server nor an external database required to run Absolute Manage, it was easily integrated into the district's existing infrastructure.

[1] E-Rate is the commonly used name for the Schools and Libraries Program of the Universal Service Fund, which is administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) under the direction of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

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> Kirk Langer
> Director of Technology
> Lincoln Public Schools

As a result, LPS was able to deploy Absolute Manage across the district in less than three weeks.

Langer notes that, because LPS's data needs vary according to user role, department and location, he was impressed that Absolute Manage offered role-based access to asset information. "Organizationally, it's neither necessary nor appropriate for all users to have access to all information, so we like that Absolute Manage lets us predefine access."

Reconciling Hardware and Software, Increasing Support Agility

Langer credits Absolute Manage for removing the burdens of asset management from his IT staff, firstly by helping to reconcile software licenses with what has been deployed. License and application management tools provide valuable insight into software use: including over or under provisioned licenses, which applications are used where, where additional software support is required, and which machines are best configured to support software needs. IT can automatically reallocate licenses, or push new software and updates accordingly.

Langer notes that this increased IT's support agility, "The automated asset management tools have reduced the time-consuming need for onsite support. Technicians now have a routine, methodological way to automatically push new software and updates, and to manage patches and imaging. There is a lot less running around."

"Technicians can easily collect detailed, up-to-date asset data, so they can more quickly and easily answer those questions directed at IT on a daily basis," he continues. "'Can you tell how many of this I have? Where is my fleet aging? Which machines require updates? Which computers have the RAM to support this program?' There's no longer a need to search for information – it's been a huge time saver and extraordinarily helpful to our team."

Fulfilling Compliance, Corporate Citizenship

Langer now customizes Absolute Manage reports to answer those questions asked by the E-Rate program. He can easily and quickly perform custom searches, group assets and generate reports according to key E-Rate data points – such as how many Macs versus PCs are older than three years, how many of each is used by students, and what proportion is used by teachers.

Langer can also obtain an up-to-date record of inventory and accurately verify what hardware and software the school district has on hand. Asset reports help prove accountability and educate computer lifecycle management and capacity planning, so LPS regularly passes them on to key stakeholders like their executive management team, the local Board of Education, and the Nebraska Department of Education. "It's easy to generate detailed inventory reports – Absolute Manage helps us be good corporate citizens without killing ourselves in the process."

Absolute Manage also helps IT ensure that computers comply with the district's computing policies. For example, the product alerts IT to prohibited software or those applications that do not align with the schools' learning objectives. If necessary, these applications can be automatically removed or remotely terminated.

Additionally, staff mobile computers are required to connect to the network regularly for updates, so Langer uses asset reports to identify which laptops have failed to recently check-in."Absolute Manage shows us any holes in user compliance. We then know which users we need to better educate on what our policies are and why they are in place."

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Director of Technology
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Saving Time for All Staff

Langer is extremely pleased with the outcomes of implementing Absolute Manage. "Absolute Manage has proven to be a complete lifecycle management product – from procurement to retirement. It allows us to really understand the capacity of our fleet in the context of changing functional requirements and changes in the OS landscape."

"Before, we would often times rely on our instructors to track down machines in their department and record asset information. We now save about 250 plus hours of instructional time annually so, instead of gathering information on computers, teachers can better prepare for instruction."

He also states that the product saves Computing Services staff over 200 hours a year, previously spent compiling the information necessary for asset reporting. "Absolute Manage is an asset to our team – they now have more time to analyze data, because they spend so much less time collecting it."

About Absolute Manage

Absolute Manage is our lifecycle management and mobile device solution that allows IT administrators to manage PC, Mac®, Android, and iOS devices from within a single console. Customers can remotely engage with their deployment and perform standard maintenance routines as well as take strategic and responsive measures based upon the requirements of each device.

About Absolute Software

Absolute Software is the global leader in firmware-embedded persistent endpoint security and management solutions.

We provide organizations with comprehensive visibility and control over all of their endpoints – regardless of user or location. Our customers are able to optimize productivity, reduce operating costs, prove compliance, and remotely secure all of their devices and the corporate data they contain.

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