BLACKPOOL AND THE FYLDE COLLEGE
Cloudpath Enrollment System Supports Digital Campus

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CASE STUDY

OVERVIEW

- Located in Blackpool, Lancashire, England
- Associate College of Lancaster University
- Designated a National Beacon of Excellence by the government
- England's best-performing college for student achievement last year with a success rate of 92.9 percent
- Four main campuses; 22,000 students

REQUIREMENTS

Simplify and streamline wireless connectivity, enable Chromebook deployment, and support the college's mission to become a college of digital learning
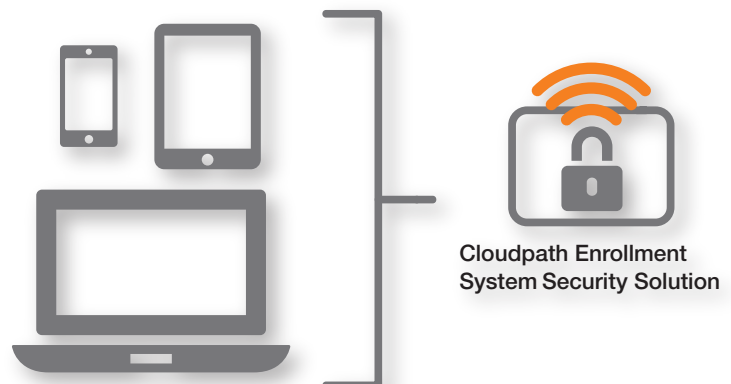
HIGHER EDUCATION

When ICT Services Manager Nick Wright arrived at Blackpool and The Fylde College (B&FC), he found a wireless network with authentication and security systems based on eight-year-old technology. Connectivity was patchy, and the IT staff was overloaded with requests to create temporary accounts that would enable users to log on. To remedy that situation, promote self-service, and support the organisation's goal of promoting digital learning anytime in anyplace, Nick and his staff began searching for a better wireless network solution.

IMPROVING CONNECTIVITY, ENHANCING SECURITY

"Users had to re-authenticate all the time," says Wright, "even after losing a signal just by moving between buildings. That meant people were re-authenticating 10 to 20 times a day, and our Servers and Storage team was spending up to 10 hours a week creating accounts. Security was also a problem: We had a WPA2 pre-shared key that was distributed on business cards." Wright researched solutions for providing secure Wi-Fi for the B&FC campuses and found that, among educational institutions, Cloudpath ES was the solution of choice. "The self enrollment feature and certificate-based authentication in particular make it the right fit for us," he says. "We require users to change passwords every six months, so enabling users to enroll their own devices is a big timesaver for our ICT staff."

Connection procedures are simple, but the ICT staff has enlisted the help of the Learning Resources staff to become "Wi-Fi experts" and assist users, if necessary, in enrolling devices. "This support means that users only come to IT if there's a serious problem," says Wright. "That has spread the load of assisting people with connecting to the network and has allowed our 20-person ICT staff to focus more on other projects."

Cloudpath Enrollment
System Security Solution

FACILITATING THE CHROMEBOOKS DEPLOYMENT INITIATIVE

B&FC has undertaken a three-year program of infrastructure upgrades intended to improve the user experience. Working with Cloudpath ES is part of that initiative, along with upgrading wireless controllers, core switches and access points. "We also want to improve users' experience in terms of the device in their hands," says Wright. "We found we can do that much more cost-effectively with Chromebooks than with PCs, so we've purchased many of them and, with Ruckus support, have built a separate network for them. Ruckus shared best practices on how to design and configure the network and deploy certificates for the Chromebooks. They've taken off like a storm. We wouldn't have gotten where we are with this initiative without Ruckus technical support." According to Wright, "Cloudpath wireless connectivity is also central to the college's initiative to provide an integrated experience for users. A reliable, robust wireless system with good authentication is critical to everything we're doing at the moment."

Among the current projects that depend on wireless connectivity are a new remote access solution and mobile management capabilities based on products from Citrix Systems that will enable the college to deliver applications

"Cloudpath and wireless connectivity are central to the college's initiative to provide an integrated experience for users."

NICK WRIGHT
ICT Services Manager, Blackpool and The Fylde College

and more through a single portal. Wright says Cloudpath helps turn the college's vision of an integrated experience into reality "by providing the security and software infrastructure we need, by enabling us to manage users and devices, and by making it possible to put some intelligence into the devices people have in their pockets."

RECEIVING A RAPID ROI

For Wright, security tops the list of benefits the college receives from Cloudpath. "This is a far more secure system than we had before,"he says. "Current legislation in the U.K. around information security includes sanctions of up to half a million pounds per incident if an organization is found guilty of a data breach. So, for me, having the assurance that our wireless network is secure is the biggest benefit." The "convenience of self-enrollment" is another key benefit. "From my point of view as an IT Service Manager," says Wright, "freeing my staff from spending time creating login accounts is a huge plus. Like most other IT departments, we were spending more time fixing things than developing things."

Wright also says he expects the return on investment in the Cloudpath solution to be substantial. "Other systems we've bought that bring such widespread benefits have paid for themselves very quickly, and I expect the same to be true for the Cloudpath solution," he says. "When we look at the cost of the software, the length of time we're going to use it, and the number of people benefiting from it, it's clearly very good value."

Going forward, the Cloudpath solution will be a key enabling technology in the College's plan to become a "college of digital learning." Wright states, "Every service we put in will support availability, quality of content and a quality experience. We want our students to have access to teaching and learning anytime, anywhere, from any device, making this essentially a 24/7 learning institution. Cloudpath supports that vision with simple, secure access to the wireless network so that our campus can be a place where students can sit down wherever they are and access whatever they need, and do so as well as from their home or office or wherever they're studying."

Wright considers Cloudpath to be a strategic product for B&FC. "Moving away from traditional IT service delivery and empowering people to use their own devices and tools to achieve what they want is the way of the future. It's essential to our strategic goal of delivering a great user experience. So for me, the Cloudpath solution is very much a strategic application, and without it, we would have much greater difficulty achieving our strategic goals."

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